This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

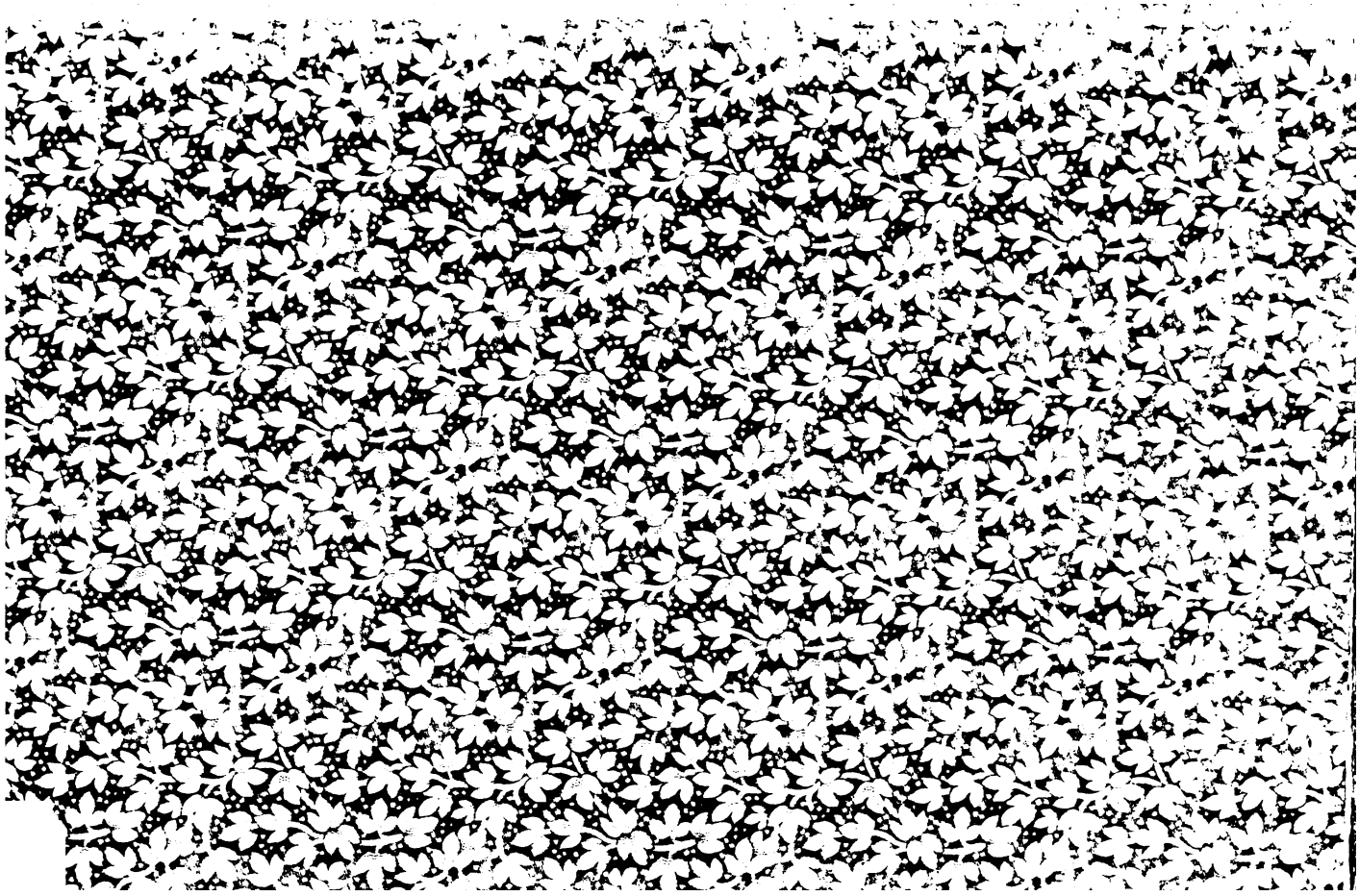
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

MISS VANDELEUR

BY THE AUTHOR OF

ABEL DRAKE'S WIFE



MISS VANDELEUR;

OR,

ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL.

A NOVEL.

BY

JOHN SAUNDERS,

AUTHOR OF 'HIRELL; OR, LOVE BORN OF STRIFE,' 'ABEL DRAKE'S WIFE,' 'ISRAEL MORT, OVERMAN,' 'THE SHERLOCKS,' 'A NOBLE WIFE,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

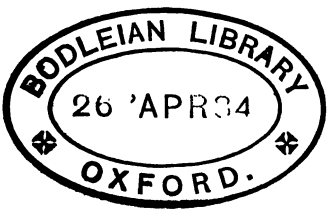
VOL. II.

LONDON: F. V. WHITE & CO.,
31 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1884.

[*All Rights reserved.*]

256. e. 297.



COLSTON AND SON, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. PAGE

MISS VANDELEUR'S LITTLE COMEDY, . . 1

CHAPTER II.

THE PORTRAIT, ... 21

CHAPTER III.

STEPHEN TAKES TO POETRY AND IS DULY REWARDED, 31

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEPARTURE, ... 46

CHAPTER V.

LEFT ALONE, ... 52

CHAPTER VI.

THE FENIAN OF THREE DAYS, . . . 65

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST PAUSE, ... 80

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISPOSAL OF THE PORTMANTEAU, . . 87

CHAPTER IX.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW, ... 92

CHAPTER X.

THE QUEEN'S SHILLING, ... 101

CHAPTER XI.

STEPHEN'S FUTURE COMRADES, . . . 110

PAGE

CHAPTER XII
THE DOCTOR'S EXAMINATION, . . . 121

CHAPTER XIII.
THE FIRST DRILL, ... 126

CHAPTER XIV.
WHAT THE ROBBERY LED TO, . . . 131

CHAPTER XV.
SERGEANT O'SHAUGHNESSY, . . . 137

CHAPTER XVI.
THE WINNER OF THE PRIZE, . . . 147

CHAPTER XVII.
GLORY IN TWO ASPECTS, ... 154

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE RIOT, ... 165

CHAPTER XIX.
THE TRIUMPH OF THE SWELL, . . . 175

CHAPTER XX.
ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD, . . 183

CHAPTER XXI.
HOW GENTLEMAN JACK LOVES WORK, . . 190

CHAPTER XXII.
THE FLYING COLUMN STOPPED IN ITS FLIGHT, . 206

CHAPTER XXIII.
THE FLYING COLUMN AGAIN ON THE WING, . 214

CHAPTER XXIV.
THE SCOUTS' FATE, ... 222

CHAPTER XXV.
STEPHEN'S NEW ACQUAINTANCE, . . . 226

CHAPTER XXVI.
STEPHEN'S BIRTHPLACE, ... 244

MISS VANDELUER.

CHAPTER I.

MISS VANDELEUR'S LITTLE COMEDY.

THAT some sort of understanding had long prevailed in the family, favouring the possible marriage of the young heiress with the present earl, Stephen knew perfectly well, before the countess had referred to the matter in their late interview, in order to show him she had set Miss Vandeleur perfectly free on her entrance into Harlaxton House.

The knowledge had for a time prevented him from considering her in any other light than as one destined for his brother

— supposing they were themselves disposed that way.

But when first Miss Vandeleur came from abroad and joined the Harlaxton circle, she was still but the school girl,— attractive, wilful and undeveloped; and therefore produced no effect on Stephen calculated to make him overlook or care for the barrier that was tacitly assumed to exist.

His own life and occupations at the same time had not yet ceased to be pleasant. He was a favourite among men, for his manly demeanour, his love of sports, and skill in them, quite as much as for the incisive character of his talk— generally full of well-aimed satire, but rarely of that kind in which one feels there is more ill-will or malignancy than humour, as is too often the case with professed satirists.

But it cannot be denied that he was at the same time indulging himself in less innocent ways; had many acquaintances

—male and female,—of which, at the beginning, he could not feel proud; and of whom, as matters progressed, he was unable at last to conceal from himself, he was heartily ashamed.

And then he began to think and look into his own position and doings, and see the frivolous character of his daily life; and so to become rapidly dissatisfied with himself and with his mother, who seemed to have encouraged him in the paths of an aimless existence; though why, he could not for the life of him discover, since he was compelled to acknowledge she was exemplary in all other relations.

And just as that discontent began to simmer perpetually in his brain, Miss Vandeleur, who had in the meantime, brief as that was, grown in stature, both of body and mind, who had, in a word, ceased to be the girl, and become the woman, began to appear to him in a new light, and to interest him, while he

outwardly seemed unchanged. And at last she so fascinated him, alike by her faults, merits, and charms, that, almost without the intention, he dropped one after another his evil or dangerous associates, till only one remained—Gentleman Jack,—and at last he was cut in the streets, as he complained to Stephen, in a previous chapter.

The scene with her in the billiard-room moved him deeply, even while through it all he still kept up his light, bantering, satirical style of talk, so that she might not perceive what was passing within him; but proceed in her own way, and in accordance with her own tastes and inclination, to so speak and act, that he might judge if the growing seriousness in his own character was likely to find any answering chord in hers.

Failing to satisfy himself on that, he found at the same time that, taking her as she was, she was infinitely delightful to him; and the close of that scene left

him only more impatient for a fresh opportunity.

'But what was the good?' he asked himself.

Apart from his own secret mental dissatisfaction with her, when he was not actually in her society, and therefore could calmly and severely reflect; apart, too, from his fear that the idea of a coronet was probably as attractive to her as to most other women similarly situated; and that her present intercourse with him might only mean her love of amusement, to which she gave way with all the more zest, pending the serious issue that must take her finally away from him; apart from all this, his brother's attentions to her were so marked, that there could be no self-deception as to what he wished and intended, in Stephen's mind.

He resolved to go more vigorously than ever into athletic sports, though conscious that any going back to what was innocent might lead him also to revert to what was

not, through the close personal links that bound the one set of influences to the other in his past.

And though, as a matter of course, he saw, as every man in his position would, how advantageous would be a marriage with her, if only the way were open, he must be credited for the honour, the good sense, and the manly independence of character, that made him determine, almost fanatically resolve, to give way to no temptation while these doubts remained.

Such were the relations of the hero and heroine up to the period, and the incidents now about to be described.

A day or two after the fancy fair, when the soreness evoked by it had passed away, the countess sought Stephen to say to him that Miss Vandeleur had been taken out on a shopping expedition by Lord Harlaxton; and, as she believed, against Frances' own inclination.

'My dear boy,' continued the countess,

'don't mistake anything I said to you in our long talk together the other day. I guess the causes of your hesitation regarding Miss Vandeleur, and respect them. You have doubts about her, which you do right to be satisfied upon, before committing yourself.'

'That is not the only difficulty,' answered Stephen, with a smile. 'Such doubts as I may feel regarding one of the proposed contracting parties, were they confined to that one, might perhaps be taken silent note of to be encountered and dealt with after marriage; but it is very awkward, if my doubts also extend to the other—that is to say—myself. However, we shall see.'

'And in happy time you can now make the trial. Listen. You shall not go to her a pauper. If you marry her, all my fortune, except a bare sufficiency for my personal wants while I live, shall be settled on you. She is half won; and if you will but throw yourself cordially

into her moods, and try and draw out that which you want to see in a sympathetic spirit, you will, I doubt not, at one and the same moment win her wholly, while seeing how richly she deserves to be won. Hush! They are here.'

A peal of bright musical laughter again heralded Miss Vandeleur's approach; and Stephen could not help thinking ironically as she entered with Lord Harlaxton, it was a pity to interfere with what looked so comfortable a state of things. However, he had given a promise. That promise he was bound to fulfil, and the more carefully, seeing how serious was the step he had decided on if the experiment failed.

But such thoughts were promptly arrested by the young lady's contagious mirth.

'Oh, my dear countess,' she said the moment she entered, 'I can scarcely speak for laughing. I am ill with laughing. I shall die with laughing, if you don't all stop me.'

'What is it about, Frances?' asked the countess.

'We have been innocently eavesdropping at a fashionable milliner's—' here she again broke out with such hearty irresistible enjoyment, that not only was Lord Harlaxton unable to help joining in, somewhat to the detriment of his habitually serious dignity of manner, but Stephen himself forgot the jealous impulses that had moved him; and began to study her bright, fair, happy face, in the very frame of mind the countess so ardently desired, and now in her watchfulness saw, and was greatly comforted by.

'Now, do not, Lord Harlaxton, set me off again,' the young heiress cried, as after getting quiet she found herself once more in danger of exploding.

'Come then,' said the countess, 'tell us all about it. Stephen and I may benefit by your mirth, since we appear to have so little of our own. Come, let us sit down.'

As they took their seats on one of those convenient lounges that afford places for four persons, so contrived that all can in luxurious ease share in a common conversation, Lord Harlaxton took care to be next Miss Vandeleur; and managed, perhaps intentionally, to suggest to Stephen a query, whether by his behaviour to her matters had not already gone too far to render possible the trial he had promised to make.

Lord Harlaxton could have done nothing more injudicious. Provocation was just the one thing to rouse Stephen. From that moment he shared, or appeared to share, fully in the general enjoyment of Miss Vandeleur's piquant narrative.

'While zigzagging, butterfly-like, from one place to another, as I suppose Stephen would say; now hovering and humming over this attraction; now hurriedly and discontentedly flying away from that, I happened to admire a locket in a jeweller's window; and nothing would satisfy my

lord but buying it, and despotically insisting on my receiving it as a gift.

Chancing next to admire a hat, he inveigled me into the shop on false pretences—he wanted a pair of gloves which they hadn't got, and didn't sell. Then I thought I would try on the hat on my own account, which pleased me, but required some little alteration; so we were shown by an assistant into a little anteroom to wait, and then became the sole spectators, or rather auditors, of a most piquant little comedy. Oh, that I could give it you as I received it; but I cannot, particularly before a critical audience.'

And then was shot a Parthian glance at Stephen, which duly penetrated, and did its work.

'Mother, believe me,' said Lord Harlaxton, 'she acts it inimitably. It is I who have had to plead to be left in quiet all the way home.'

'Well,' continued Miss Vandeleur, 'the characters are the mistress of the show-

room; several assistants (whom I must compress into one), and a lady. Presently the mistress came to a desk close by the half-open door of our little ear-hole, and knowing nothing of our being there, the comedy began; which we liked all the better for the perfect unconsciousness of the performers that they were comedians. The mistress had a rough, loud voice, which contrasted with the submissive tone of each assistant.'

And Miss Vandeleur so richly and humorously imitated, perhaps enhanced, this rough loud voice all through her narrative, without any need to name the speaker, that the very first sound produced a general burst of laughter, in which the countess felt it a real delight to be able to join.

'Mistress: Miss Gentle, what did that lady in the green velvet buy?

'Assistant: Nothing, ma'am.

'Mistress: Nothing! We can't give you forty pounds a-year for nothing.

The rule here is everyone who comes buys!

'Wasn't that delicious to begin with?' Miss Vandeleur asked her audience; 'and for me, a pupil panting to distinguish myself at some future fancy fair!'

And then there was another Parthian glance at Stephen, to remind him that if she had condoned she had not forgotten his offence; and he had better be cautious, for he might else guess what impended.

'As to Lord Harlaxton, he looked as scared as if he thought the rule might be enforced on him, and he be obliged to carry home heaven knows what!'

Amid the general laughter this caused, Lord Harlaxton protested he was only listening for, and afraid of losing the next good thing.

'The audience waits!' remarked Stephen. 'Beware of catcalls.' So the comedy was resumed.

'Assistant: Mrs Greathead, ma'am, says

you have put the rose on the pretty side of her face.

'Mistress: Shift it then to the ugly one!

'Assistant: And please, ma'am, Miss Diffident wants to know what colour will be most becoming to her as a generally useful bonnet.

'Mistress: Generally useful! that means one bonnet doing duty for six. There's a Terry velvet in the No. 4 drawer that will just suit her. It was a delicate violet in the summer, it is now settling into a comfortable winter-red, and most likely will emerge a primrose with the advance of spring. Ha! ha! ha!'

Stimulated by the increasing enjoyment of her audience, Miss Vandeleur perfectly revelled in the fun of her recollections, as she went on,—

'Assistant: A lady, ma'am, wants something very choice and fashionable. You needn't show her anything else; she knows what's what as well as ourselves.

'Mistress: If she did she'd make less fuss about it. Try her with the Methusalah.'

'The Methusalah, Frances?' interposed the amused countess.

'That's just what the wondering girl said,' responded Miss Vandeleur.—

'Assistant: The Methusalah, ma'am?

'Mistress: Oh, you're the new-comer! The Methusalah, my dear, is always the oldest inhabitant of the show-room. Quick! The brown satin, in the same No. 4 drawer; your sure to know it.'

Miss Vandeleur did not wait for the renewed laughter of her audience, but herself led the way; and they were irresistibly obliged to follow, as captives in old times were obliged to follow — but in a very different mood—the car of their conqueror in a triumphal procession. Sobering a little, she said,—

'There was now a pause, and I began to think the comedy was over; but it soon began again.'

'Assistant: Mrs Sly's bonnet, ma'am, one pound fifteen.

'Mistress: She didn't haggle about price?'

'Assistant: Oh no! She never does. She has paid the fifteen shillings, and the bill for a pound only is to go to her husband.

'Mistress: An excellent wife—and—ahem!—an excellent customer. Oblige her by all means. She is so anxious to convince her good man that he pays less than the ordinary price, that she doesn't mind our really getting a little more for the accommodation.'

'That's capital!' here interrupted Lord Harlaxton; 'but my conscience compels me to say the last remark did not reach my ears.'

'O Frances! Frances!' exclaimed the countess. 'Fairly caught! The true dramatist is unveiled at last!'

'Now, does anybody think I could even hope to refine such very fine gold?' demanded Miss Vandeleur, with prompt

audacity. 'I confess only to being a sympathetic reporter.'

'Well, we are warned,' rejoined the countess.

'And watching!' added Stephen.

Miss Vandeleur seemed to grow fully conscious of her new responsibilities, and to gather herself together for the occasion.

'Now comes a change. A lady walks up to the desk, and begins:—

'Lady: Mrs Decker, how could you send me such a vulgar dowdy of a bonnet? I should never have forgiven myself if I had worn it!

'Mistress: I'm very sorry, ma'am, if the bonnet does not please you. It is in a remarkable style certainly; but what people call good taste is so common now-a-days, that I thought something more *recherché*— Yes, I did think that *you* ma'am—

'Lady: Oh, I agree with your principle, but this is so very *outré*.

'Mistress: The very thing that won her grace's heart!

'Lady: Her grace?

'Mistress: Yes, the Duchess of Battersea. I intended this bonnet to have been all the rage next season. I knew you, ma'am, could make it fashionable at once, but I felt the awful responsibility; so I ventured to ask her grace's opinion, and she ran off with it directly, saying I must make you another.

'Lady: Indeed! Really! Well, though I can't say I quite like it myself, I own there's something about it—

'Mistress: *Distingué*, ma'am.

'Lady: *Distingué*, truly.

'Mistress: Ah, ma'am, if all ladies had but your discrimination!

'Lady: Nay, Mrs Decker, if all milliners would but learn from their customers as you do! Good morning! I shall recommend the bonnet everywhere.'

How Stephen had enjoyed the separate hits of what Miss Vandeleur called her little comedy, may be readily imagined; and with what delight he had watched, in

his quiet way, the face, and occasional pantomime of the fair speaker. But the accumulation through the double process became at last too much for him. He fairly roared again before she could establish silence to say, with a show of melancholy,—

'The best things will end, and so I found presently, as I came to the last scene of the milliner's show-room :—

'Assistant: Mrs Pious, ma'am, wishes you to send some one for orders.

'Mistress: Certainly. Send at once. Good, sensible old lady! As she says, "Since we are made in the Almighty's image, Mrs Decker, what a duty to set off that image to the best advantage!"'

Miss Vandeleur bowed from her imaginary stage, in acknowledgment of the rapturous cheers from her small auditory; bowed from side to side as if they might be three hundred instead of three; and then, removing her chair, sat down by the countess, and began to talk of some

totally different and perfectly uninteresting topic; leaving, however, a fresh and distinct impression on the minds and hearts of those present of a new power they had not hitherto anticipated, and which each one might have to reckon with, in regard to his or her own particular desires or movements.

CHAPTER II.

THE PORTRAIT.

THE succeeding minutes were embarrassing. Stephen waited for Lord Harlaxton to go, and Lord Harlaxton was equally solicitous for the departure of Stephen; while the countess watched both with a sense of annoyance, not at all shared in by Miss Vandeleur; who, fully appreciating the position, felt she was monarch of all she surveyed, the arbiter for the moment of the destinies of her two lovers.

She looked, moved, and spoke with a demure but rich enjoyment of the scene, half thinking to herself here was to be the prepar-

ation of a *denouement* for her little comedy, that might contain a serious element.

Suddenly she started, and cried aloud, while her hands became busy in search about her dress,—

'Oh! where's my locket? I have lost it —Lord Harlaxton's kind gift—or left it behind at the milliner's!'

'In payment, no doubt, for your entertainment!' observed Stephen, audaciously.

'I remember now,' continued Miss Vandeleur, 'I laid it down while trying on the hat, and, I suppose, thought I had taken it up again. Oh dear, I am so sorry!'

She looked so sympathetically at Lord Harlaxton that he could do no less than offer to go back to the place in search.

Miss Vandeleur at once accepted his kindness, and was profuse in her thanks; a little too profuse, thought the countess; as she considered this was the kind of thing that probably influenced Stephen so unfavourably, and made his judgment of the young lady so harsh. However, Lord

Harlaxton hurried away. The course was clear, and the face of the countess brightened with animation and hope as she rose to go, took Stephen's arm, and whispered to him before parting at the door,—

'Now is your time. Again I say throw yourself into her moods!'

A moment after Stephen and Miss Vandeleur were meeting face to face, and this was the mutual salutation:—

'Well, General Moth!'

'Well, Lady Butterfly!'

'A truce to warfare. Tell me, isn't your brother kind?'

'That depends,' said Stephen.

'Depends!' cried Miss Vandeleur.

'Yes, on the reward he may expect.'

'Come then,' she continued, 'help me to think of something suitable as a return gift.'

'You are clever with brush and palette,' responded Stephen, 'paint his portrait. He would like that. And considering the sort of gods we place now-a-days on the

social Olympus, he would make a very creditable object for female idolatry. Try.'

There was something very like a sly expression came over Miss Vandeleur's face, merging, however, quickly into one that showed her secret but strong desire to hear how he would answer, as she asked,—

'And may I recommend a similar process to you and the lady—whoever she may be—that no doubt pre-occupies your thoughts and time, and takes you so much away?'

'I don't paint,' was Stephen's brief answer to the young lady's insidious question.

'Oh yes, you do—in words. So no evasion. There *is* a lady, we all know.'

'And you want *me* to paint *her* portrait?'

'Well, it might interest me, and serve you to pass the time.'

'Queens command, subjects have only to obey. I am ready.' And a certain

sparkle in Stephen's eyes seemed to show he liked the prospect.

'But will it be true?' demanded Miss Vandeleur, her mind fluctuating between hope and fear as to a different *denouement* of her little comedy than the one she had so fondly anticipated a few minutes ago. 'Will it be life-like?'

'If I have the skill to make it so,' responded Stephen.

'Perhaps you can draw from the heart?' said Miss Vandeleur.

'Perhaps,' was the reply.

'Begin!'

'Well, her hair is bright, golden, glittering, fresh as from Venus's own hand, who seems to have shaped it in delicate tiny waves, reminding one of the sunny dancing billows of her own natal morn.'

'One might almost suppose you were on the beach to see. Proceed. Her eyes—'

'Are hardly the same in their different moods. Now, in their blue depths you see whole universes of thought opening

upon you; and now they are so fraught with the boy Cupid's own mischievousness that you cannot meet them with safety, yet are unable to fly. Sometimes they seem to share your own confusion, and you venture again to challenge their power; but only to feel that in every glance lurks a delicious death.'

'Oh that I were a man!' exclaimed Miss Vandeleur with well-feigned enthusiasm, 'to show how I appreciate so exquisite a creature!'

But Stephen noticed that the little feet were (quite unconsciously to their fair owner) tapping the floor irritably, and threatening an explosion. And, truth to say, he went on with increased zest in his artistic labours for that very reason.

'Ah, but her cheek!' he said, as though revelling in the contemplation of it.

'Is that so very wonderful?'

'Yes, though faulty: too richly red, as though the sun that coloured it loved it too well to leave it.'

'So even her imperfections increase her charms!' said Miss Vandeleur, with a perceptible increase of sharpness in the tone. 'Have you done?'

'Done!' exclaimed Stephen. 'Why, I have only just got to her lips.'

Miss Vandeleur's instinctive love of wit and humour prevailed for a moment over all else that was in her mind and heart; and it was with difficulty she restrained her laughter, and managed to say,—

'And may I ask how long you propose to stay there?'

'Only while I note her teeth, those ivory gates of her soul's mansion; her lips like fairy rose-banks before, so round and rich, and so overcharged with sweetness,—no wonder the words that pass between them steal a more than mortal influence, and almost make one forget the pure, noble and maidenly thoughts they convey.'

'So masterly a portrait should not remain unfinished,' said Miss Vandeleur,

in tones of stifled emotion, after a strange pause on Stephen's part.

'Who could do it thoroughly?' he responded.

'You are too modest! You do it very well, indeed. Wonderfully well! One would think you had never done, or cared to do anything else.'

'I fear to tire you, although it is a subject I never weary of.'

'Of course not,' rejoined Miss Vandeleur, putting a strong pressure upon herself to be careful of her words, and avoid anything approaching to an outburst.

'Else,' continued Stephen, 'I would speak of her form so perfect, so full of grace, and so suggestive of the yearning for another's support, that even the arms, like delicate tendrils, seem waiting but to twine.'

'Around his neck, I suppose,' was the inward comment of Miss Vandeleur as she turned away, in fear of showing by her face how deeply she was moved.

'But I must stop,' said Stephen, with cruel enjoyment. 'I am dazzled with the encircling splendour. One must shade one's eyes to look at all.'

'Why not take her, then—I would—if she would have you?' burst out Miss Vandeleur in excited tones.

And then what a change came over her, as Stephen caught her dress, knelt before her, his eyes, face, manner in an instant full of tender respect and earnestness, and murmured in a thrilling, yet strong, manly voice,—

'Do you say so? Do you not yet know that if I have succeeded in my portraiture, it was only because I drew in my own fashion from the sweet original before me?'

The countess, who had been waiting near in extreme anxiety, as seeing that on this opportunity depended probably the success or ruin of her scheme, seemed to understand what was passing; so came into the room just far enough to see the attitude of the lovers at the critical

moment; and then clasping her hands, and turning her eyes heavenwards in devout thankfulness, she passed away in silence, unnoticed.

'Oh, Stephen, do you speak truly?' was all Miss Vandeleur could murmur, for her whole heart seemed to flow into these few words; when they were interrupted by a voice from the outside, saying,—

'I will come to you presently.'

It was the voice of Lord Harlaxton; and it sufficed to make Stephen leap to his feet and toss the billiard balls about; and to send Miss Vandeleur to a side-table for a book, with which, and a throbbing brain, she sat down, and appeared to be reading as the earl entered.

CHAPTER III.

STEPHEN TAKES TO POETRY AND IS DULY REWARDED.

THE moment Lord Harlaxton appeared in the room, Miss Vandeleur put down the book as quickly as she had taken it up, and advanced with a smile to meet him, and said,—

'You have succeeded?'

'Yes,' was the reply. 'The locket was found, on inquiry, in the possession of one of the assistants; who was confused and agitated, and said that in the hurry of business she quite forgot to mention it. Unluckily, the mistress on learning our names became so impressed with her duty to you,

that she would not give it up till satisfied that you had no desire to prosecute.'

'Oh, my dear lord, it is really too bad to trespass again on your goodness, but I am sure the poor girl meant no harm, and ought to be instantly put out of her misery.'

Lord Harlaxton looked at her, and at Stephen before he again spoke.

'I will do that at once. A servant shall go directly.'

'The mission is too noble for such a messenger,' said Miss Vandeleur. 'But as you please!' There was no mistaking the haughty tone of her voice, and Lord Harlaxton hastened to reassure her.

'Oh, I will go with pleasure if you really wish it.'

'I do, indeed, for the poor girl's sake. And I shall be grateful—most grateful!'

'Really?' asked the earl, in his tenderest tone.

'Really!' responded the lady, in her most impressive manner.

'And I shall find you here on my return?'

'Can you doubt it?'

Lord Harlaxton waited for no more; but kissing his fingers to her, and she similarly responding, he hurried away, intending also as hurriedly to return; Miss Vandeleur watching demonstratively his departure.

That clever lady had accomplished her object. She was again alone with Stephen. And if she had been a little unscrupulous as to the means, in her overmastering desire to prevent the earl's interruption from stopping the natural progress and end of such a beginning, it must be said in her excuse that much of the attitude she had assumed with the earl was habitual to her, and therefore thought lightly of by herself, and consequently (so she chose to assume) by others. And as to Stephen's being a witness of her behaviour, if she thought at all of the effect upon him, it was only to attribute to him the same strong motive

for securing Lord Harlaxton's departure as she felt herself; and therefore the same self-condonation, if any such were needed, of the lover-like artifice she had so skilfully but disingenuously used; not merely to relieve the assistant, as to whom she had spoken with true feeling, but to give Lord Harlaxton no alternative but that of executing the mission himself.

But these few words, and the accompanying manner that so favourably influenced the earl, had a precisely opposite effect upon Stephen. He had watched with critical interest all that passed, and the resulting influence was decisive. All that he had previously feared, returned to him with tenfold intensity of conviction, jealousy pouring oil on the inward fire, and was summed up in his saying to himself,—

'Incorrigible! I was right. Coquetry in her very blood! This decides me!'

And so, at the very moment Miss Vandeleur and Lord Harlaxton were exchanging a last look before he would pass from her

sight, Stephen was giving the promised signal to Gentleman Jack; who, notwithstanding the long delays, had kept steadily on the watch.

He opened the window, and then opened his handkerchief slowly out, which Gentleman Jack duly saw, and exulted in accordingly.

Then Stephen walked away, took a chair in a corner, sat down, and began to write in a note-book. Lord Harlaxton now quite gone, Miss Vandeleur turned towards Stephen, her face bright and joyous, her air and attitude full of confiding, loving expectancy.

Seeing how Stephen was engaged, and his back being turned towards her, she said to herself,—

'Writing! Poetry, perhaps! And to me!' With airy, noiseless, dainty steps she drew near, and suddenly snatched the book from him, crying aloud, 'I've got it!'

In alarm and anger that must have been unmistakable to Miss Vandeleur in any

other and less pre-occupied mood, Stephen exclaimed,—

'Miss Vandeleur!'

'Oh, you may pretend to be vexed, but I am not going to be Miss Vandeleured out of my peep!'

Stephen at once changed his manner, and said softly and anxiously,—

'Let me then, as a favour, request you to give me back that book unread.'

'Is it poetry?' demanded Miss Vandeleur.

'I don't call it so,' was the answer.

'To a lady?'

'No,' said Stephen.

'Ah, traitor, you evade me!' exclaimed Miss Vandeleur, returning to the charge, just when she seemed about to give way. 'Is it *on* a lady?'

'Yes,' replied Stephen, in something like the tones of a criminal, who knows his answer may bring his speedy execution, but feels constrained to give it as the only chance of escape, by mollifying his judge.

But the judge in question was inexorable; believing, no doubt, the poetry concerned her, and would be something very sweet and precious; and which Stephen's caution as to committing himself after having had time for reflection made him so unwilling to consent to surrender; so she promptly asked,—

'What lady?'

'I won't tell you!' was Stephen's equally prompt reply. 'And I'll answer no more questions till you have given me back my book.'

Determined not to be baffled, and beginning now to suspect there was more in the matter than she had been supposing, Miss Vandeleur said,—

'The countess is close by. May I show it to her?'

'Certainly not!'

'Now then for my ultimatum,' said Miss Vandeleur. 'I will give it back if you will assure me on your honour as a gentleman, that what is written on that page'—

and she held it up for him to look at—'has nothing whatever to do with me?'.

'What I could answer is one thing, but whether I ought to answer a question so forced on me is quite another thing.'

Moving swiftly and suddenly so as to leave a table between her and Stephen, she said,—

'Then I will read!'

He moved threateningly towards her, still veiling his true feelings under a half-humorous manner, but she stopped him by saying,—

'One step nearer, and I call for the countess! She's close by!'

Abandoning all further effort, Stephen turned away, saying,—

'You may have cause to regret this, Miss Vandeleur!'

'Oh, I know,' said that young lady, recovering her joyousness, as she recovered her confidence that all was right, through Stephen's yielding at last.

'Oh, I know,' she said again to him.

'Poets always make such a fuss when they think they have written anything particularly good. The world even must not know except on its knees, and prepared for worship. I tell you beforehand, I know I've a treat in store.'

And so saying Miss Vandeleur began to read,—

> 'Fair Olwen hath such wondrous charms,
> 'Tis heaven to be within her arms;
> And she's—'

The sudden stop that then took place was a critical moment for both parties. Stephen felt his eyes irresistibly drawn to Miss Vandeleur's, though prepared to receive a dreadful shock in so doing.

What he had feared, however, and tried so earnestly to prevent—too late—were as nothing to the reality. Miss Vandeleur's face flushed to a deeper, darker red than he had ever seen before in a human countenance—and then changed to so deadly a white, as filled Stephen with fear and remorse.

But it required only a few moments for her to recover her courage and self-possession, and to deal with the insult which had pierced her to the very quick, in a manner Stephen was even yet little prepared for.

Turning her eyes, which literally blazed with anger, full on Stephen, but speaking in low, measured accents, that indicated the strength of her self-command, in spite of the occasional tremor that would find way to Stephen's ear and heart; while a forced smile, almost a laugh, broke over her face, she said,—

'You think I have not the courage to finish as I began—and read your verses aloud. Listen:

"And she's—"

But stay! The poet-creator likes no doubt to study his creation as a whole.'

And Stephen did listen; rapt in wonder, admiration, and bitter, keen remorse for the cruel anguish he had inflicted, while mean-

ing only to satiate, and so relieve, his own resentment at her behaviour to Lord Harlaxton; and at the same time satisfy himself by a burning record of the incident, that he was justified in the immediate event to follow—his departure.

In this state did he listen to the verses of his note-book, every line thrilling from the voice of the speaker still more deeply through his heart and mind.

'"Fair Olwen hath such wondrous charms,
'Tis heaven to be within her arms;
And she's so charitably given,
She wishes all mankind in heaven."

You have underlined the last few words. If I have failed to do them justice, pardon me. And now there only remains to say, the fair Olwen thanks you!'

'Believe me—' murmured Stephen, in a voice of deep agitation.

'What! That you did not mean me? I do—I will believe it, if you say so. I may have been rash and foolish, and fearfully mistaken.'

So spake the unhappy girl—her hope and love in an instant once more dominating her. Stephen half shut his eyes for a few seconds, as if to take the safer counsel with himself, but at last was constrained to say,—

'I would lie if I could. I cannot.'

What might have followed, had they both been left alone, neither was destined to know, for Lord Harlaxton now returned, and saw in both their faces, but more especially in Miss Vandeleur's, signs of some deep offence having been given, which he naturally supposed Stephen alone could be responsible for.

'What does this mean?' he demanded of Stephen, in fierce accents.

'I have nothing to say to you,' retorted Stephen, calmly confronting him.

Miss Vandeleur now interposed, and addressing the earl, said, in tones of icy severity,—

'And as to me, these verses, called forth by my flagrant behaviour with you, may

sufficiently speak.' And therewith she gave him the note-book, still open at the page.

He read them hurriedly, in a low voice, but distinct enough for both the hearers again to hear, what was now a kind of terrible punishment to both. When he had done, their effect upon him was shown in the epithet he launched at Stephen,—

'Scoundrel!'

'Brother!' answered Stephen, simply; but the tone and manner were such as to indicate a meaning for the word worse even than the one that had been applied to him. 'But take comfort. You are both of a mind. My presence may be inconvenient. I withdraw!'

He bowed low to Miss Vandeleur, who had turned away, and immediately left the saloon, and then the home of his ancestry, perhaps for ever.

'I hear the countess's step!' said Miss

Vandeleur. 'Spare her! oh, spare her the knowledge of what has passed.'

'By all means. Let us withdraw for a minute or two to consider how to meet her.'

They had scarcely left the place before the countess entered; her face, step, and gestures all betokening the joyful expectation that possessed her, and which her eager thoughts shaped in some such fashion as this:—

'All is ready. He has won her. They love me—will sympathise with the story I must now tell—will be foremost in proposing of themselves the sacrifice necessary. I shall lie down to-night freed from the past—secure for the future! And how grateful, Heaven alone will know!'

At one and the same moment Lord Harlaxton returned with Miss Vandeleur, and Richards, the steward, came in from the hall to say,—

'This card, my lady, has just been left at the door for you by a shabby, strange-looking man, in a dress suit.'

As the countess received the card, her face showed that she was conscious she was about to read what she felt must be for her a sentence of death. The card ran,—

'DEAREST MOTHER, — All is settled against me as regards the lady. I go now to begin a new career. Give me in thought the blessing I could not ask in words. I *will* deserve it, if I can. Farewell. May Heaven preserve, and tenderly regard you. S. C. F.'

The countess would have fallen prostrate on the floor as she reached the last words, but that Miss Vandeleur and the earl had been carefully watching, and so caught and placed her in a chair, senseless; while Miss Vandeleur, who knelt at her feet, in the bitterest distress, alternately chafed and kissed her hands; and Lord Harlaxton leaned over both, with looks of the deepest sympathy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEPARTURE.

STILLING as well as he could the emotion he felt at quitting his home to go forth into the world, penniless, or nearly so, to seek his fortune, while resigning every advantage that birth, friends, influence had given him as aids, Stephen strode so swiftly—so fiercely through one back street after another, that Gentleman Jack, with the portmanteau, could scarcely keep up with him.

He looked indeed not merely as though he were seeking his fortune, but meant to take her by the throat when found, and compel her to come to terms.

The route chosen enabled him to escape notice of any acquaintance, and so he reached an inn in the suburbs, where he obtained a private room.

'Thanks, Jack, for this service,' he said, the moment the portmanteau was deposited on the table. 'I can't ask you to sit down and refresh yourself, but there's half-a-crown to get what you want elsewhere. Here we part. I know not yet what I shall do, but a speedy decision is forced on me; and that requires careful thinking out. So good-bye!'

He held out his hand to Gentleman Jack; who did not, however, take it, though he took the money from it, saying,—

'You want, I see, to keep your movements unknown!'

'From my family, yes; for a time.'

'Well, then, won't it be better to let me stay till you have decided on your course, so that I may again be your luggage bearer instead of a stranger?'

Stephen hesitated for a single moment, then said with sharp decision,—

'No; we part here!'

'When to meet again?'

'Ah, who shall say! Since I cannot foresee my own course, how am I likely to guess at yours?'

'Well, I was in hope that—' began Gentleman Jack, but Stephen interrupted him hastily.

'All I can say that you will care to hear is to repeat my promise to aid you into some decent way of life, if fortune ever gives me the means. My prospects, however, at present are so blank, that it is at once ludicrous and painful my talking of anything of the kind.'

Seeing Gentleman Jack still hesitated, while looking at him with a pleading face, he added,—

'Now, Jack, let us part in good feeling. Minutes even are precious. I cannot and will not be delayed—there!'

Again he held out his hand, and this

time it was taken and very warmly pressed. Then, with something like a tear, which Gentleman Jack managed to squeeze into his eye, they separated—to that worthy's great disgust.

Some little time before Stephen's departure, Gentleman Jack had made such use of his opportunities in hovering about Harlaxton House as to get familiar with two or three of the servants and hangers-on. He thus picked up bit by bit gossip about the family, which meant nothing in particular to the retailers, but a great deal to Gentleman Jack.

For it must now be told that his incessant attempts to revive the old friendship with Stephen were not solely owing to his poverty and desperate plight, but to a belief that had long been growing in his mind, that there was a secret affecting the family which possibly might have some special relation to Stephen, and at all events might be worth finding out.

Stephen himself, in unguarded moods of companionship, had said things which first inspired the idea; while, like the gossipers aforesaid, he had evidently drawn no such conclusion in his own thoughts.

The difference in character between the two brothers; their unbrotherly attitude towards each other; the countess's long solitude, and something mysterious in her reserve;—these, and similar facts, were caught up and treasured by Gentleman Jack, as matters to be borne in mind, and looked into if the chance came.

Had not the time come, he asked himself, when Stephen gave him the first intimation that he was thinking of leaving home?

Such a departure, otherwise unmeaning and idiotic, might be only one step of Stephen's progress towards a solution of the secret.

If he could then stick to him, he would soon find it out, or find he was mistaken.

Intense, therefore, was his disappoint-

ment when he found that all seemed to be thrown away by his dismissal at the suburban inn, without the slightest sign of any wish on Stephen's part they should meet again ; or an indication how, without the wish, Gentleman Jack might contrive to get on Stephen's trail.

CHAPTER V.

LEFT ALONE.

THE moment Gentleman Jack disappeared, the terrible inward conflict that had been kept under during the passage through the streets, broke out; and Stephen had an hour of such misery as he had never before known, or contemplated as possible.

But, as yet, it was not the loss of his home, or the terror of the future he might have to meet, that he thought of. His whole heart and soul were engrossed with the remembrance of the late scene with Miss Vandeleur; and of the probable

consequence—her marriage ere long with the earl.

He felt with remorse how deadly was the insult, if rightly perceived and felt, as it evidently had been by her; while the fact of her so receiving it, showed him too late he must have cruelly misjudged her.

Then her beauty, her winning manner, her grace of person, and sunny brightness of mind, seemed to come before his vision more vividly than ever, now that she was lost; now that his own behaviour had called forth irresistible evidence of that quality he had so much doubted, — a strength of character, that sooner or later would redeem her from besetting faults.

He tried to remember her faults, to reconcile himself to himself, by again picturing her behaviour to Lord Harlaxton.

'It was unwomanly. It was an act that might be the forerunner in life of—'

But he stopped, and turned with disgust from his own thoughts; and patiently strove to forget them, and devote himself to the business of the hour, the consideration—what was he to do?

Then his aged and sad mother seemed for a few moments actually to stand before him, saying nothing, but looking so piteously and reproachfully in his face, that to escape it, he began to walk rapidly to and fro in the room, to the great wonderment of the bar cronies below; who were discussing his appearance, his portmanteau, his object in coming here, and, on the whole, getting decidedly suspicious.

Suddenly the steps ceased; Stephen had brought himself to by the words,—

'What's done is done. The only question now is—What's to follow? What am I to do? Which means—What can I do? A narrowing of the question that should be satisfying, for I see but one thing in all this world for which I am

fit; and which Nature, in her bounty, is quite ready to give me, the inestimable career of a private soldier!

'And can I herd with such men? Know no other companions? Able neither to join in their habits of life apart from the military routine of duty, nor in their ways of thought—if they ever do think. Repelled ceaselessly by their companionship, having nothing in common with them, and forbidden to keep apart by the penalty of their general dislike, and the ill-will of the more despicable among their number!

'Well, if the life does not look attractive, choose another!

'Fool! you knew vaguely before you committed yourself, though you would not then stop to think the matter out, you had no choice. You saw that plainly, and only hesitated so long in your smouldering dissatisfaction with your home, yourself, and pretty well everything beside, because the end was so clear and humiliating!

'This is idle talk. I have no choice! I have no friends to appeal to; and if I had, I could not go to them without suggesting all sorts of mysteries, or giving explanations that are equally out of the question.

'Is it not worth while to turn the shield and look at the other side?

'Suppose I could bear all the jealousies of the barrack-room and its squalid life; the hard occasional labour; the routine of duty unattended by a single circumstance, that can make the private look forward to it with pleasure or satisfaction —suppose I could thus steer my course between all sorts of possible outrages, while conquering all provocations to anger, and never giving way so as to bring down humiliating or cruel punishments; could I not then achieve my own reward, and pass through all to a commission, then return to my home independent—no longer ashamed of the waste of life?

'But make no mistakes. Let me be

sure I can do and bear all this, for if not, the great humiliation of a return home would be the wiser course. And before I could do *that*, under present circumstances, I think a touch of the razor on my throat would be on the whole preferable.

'Where now have I brought myself—but to this—I must go to a hard life, a bitter life, for many months at least, and yet I do not know but I may fail—and so come to the razor at last after so much added pain.

'My past—it is no use denying it—has been one of sheer indulgence. And yet I think to be a private soldier!

'How I should have laughed any one of my former associates out of such a ridiculous fancy! Am I, then, compounded of better stuff than these other gilded youths?—myself having been foremost in all their follies, weaknesses, and love of habitually making things pleasant—no matter at whose cost.'

'One only thing do I see—and surely that is the maddest thing in the way of temptation that ever mortal man devised for his own, or other people's solace.

'But that I do see. Once in, I must go on. What comes to be borne I must bear; for else I shall find something infinitely worse in the background.

'It may be only one of the delusions a man takes up when all others have flown, but I think I could fight my way through, if only I could persuade myself to the trial.'

'Trial!' A queer word to use, seeing that once I have made the plunge, judgment follows; and the sentence is—No retreat!'

He stopped, apparently without any decision, but immediately took up his hat, went out, and took a cab to a street far away, where he remembered to have seen on a bookseller's stall a second-hand Army List for the current year.

This list he bought, then hurried back in the same cab, and began to turn over the pages to find out where was the best

place to enlist, if he should have courage and resolution finally to decide on the serious step he meditated.

This took a long time; for wherever he looked there turned up the name of some officer known to him, or that he might be known to; but at last he settled on the part relating to the Curragh Camp, Ireland; for not one of the officers there mentioned, could he recognise directly or indirectly. So far satisfied, he was going on, when suddenly he stopped the driver, and discharged him, causing the portmanteau to be put down on the pavement by his side.

What could be the meaning of this movement? It was a by-street he stood in, dark, without shops, and with no apparent building near that he could possibly want.

But he had seen Gentleman Jack, at the moment the cabman, with that love of short cuts that characterises the fraternity, had turned into this gloomy street.

He hardly knew whether to laugh or be angry. How had the fellow managed to keep up with him? Then he remembered there had been several delays on the road he had not thought of in the pre-occupation of his mind.

But where was he now?

That question was soon answered. Gentleman Jack's visage dawned upon him by the aid of light from a window, advancing, cheerily humming a tune, perfectly unconscious, so it seemed, of Stephen's proximity, till they almost touched.

Then he started, looked at the portmanteau, and exclaimed in a tone of wonder,—

'Well, of all the coincidences I ever knew or heard of, this is the most astonishing!'

Stephen could not help laughing outright at what he esteemed Jack's consummate impudence and consummate acting, who left him no time for comment or interruption.

'Cab broke down? Waiting for another? Oh, I'll soon find one. How lucky I came this way, but my lodging is in this neighbourhood.'

'My dear fellow, go to it. It's a raw night. I envy you a quiet fireside, and, perhaps, with a pleasant companion. I want no help, and since I must speak plainly, I wish in the fullest sense and meaning of the words to be *left alone!*'

The friendly tone of the beginning was succeeded by one so stern as he came to the end, that Gentleman Jack promptly succumbed to what he esteemed the mere humour of the moment, and said,—

'All right! I'm glad anyhow to be able once more to wish you good-bye. But don't be hard on poor Jack when at times you do think of him.'

'Trust me for that,' said Stephen, as he again, with renewed friendliness, shook him by the hand; and Gentleman Jack went on his way, which naturally might be to his lodgings, but was certainly the direc-

tion in which Stephen wanted himself to go.

He watched Gentleman Jack the entire length of the street, where he turned and disappeared. By this time an empty cab came up going the same way, but when Stephen had stopped it, thrown in his portmanteau, taken a last look down the street and saw no person whatever, then he caused the cabman to turn back for a considerable distance, and then, as if changing his mind, again turned but by quite a new route, into his first course, and drove rapidly to the London and North-Western Station.

The portmanteau already bore the name of Stephen Shand. Giving it to a porter, he directed him to label it for Dublin by the night train, which would soon start.

As he walked on the platform he shrouded his features as well as he could by a travelling cap, as if in fear of the night air, while he peered into every face

that he thought might be Gentleman Jack's, saying to himself,—

'The rascal's so clever—he may even yet have out-manœuvred me; perhaps anticipated the very dodge I was about to practise, and ran round after leaving me to the very place where I first saw him. Still I watched closely even there.'

But he saw Gentleman Jack no more; so got into a third-class carriage for the first time in his life—almost without thinking of the difference, or what it might portend as to his future. He seated himself in a corner away from the door; then, as other passengers began to come in, he appeared to be asleep, while indeed he had never before in all this life been so fully awake, in every sense of the word.

As the train moved, and he knew they were off, he communed with himself in this fashion,—

'If now I hesitate, I must now return, and own that the hardships which thousands of men face every year for the

humblest of motives, I cannot face, even though I see my only chance of redemption lies that way.'

'Of course I might go, try the experiment, and then if not suited somehow, find the money for my discharge, go home, and be greeted with the congratulations of my friends!' A bitter satiric laugh stopped him for a moment. 'Enough. I return to my position. If on reaching Dublin I hesitate, I must and will return—and eat the bread of shame as I best can.'

'And now for a sleep—and, I hope, some rest to my brain—for I am afraid I shall have serious use for it ere long. Well, we shall see.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE FENIAN OF THREE DAYS.

PASSENGERS came in and went out at the few stopping stations, among them persons that Stephen would certainly have conversed with under different circumstances, but not one word passed his lips during the journey from London to Chester; and naturally no one attempted to speak to the young man in the far corner, so shut up in sleep, or in his own thoughts.

Hearing from the talk of others that the train stopped for refreshments at Chester, he asked himself, in a lazy, indif-

ferent mood, whether it was worth while to get out and eat something, which he began to feel was becoming necessary; but before he had decided he heard the summons along the train for the passengers, —'Take your seats!' So he kept his. Some cause, however, delayed the train a little while, and then he noticed that all the passengers in whose company he had been had gone away; and a very stout lady had come in, who was angrily rating the railway company, as represented in the person of an innocent and amused porter, for their delay.

Presently a gentleman outside, who was smoking, began, between every whiff, to converse with the lady on all sorts of subjects, as though he desired that every topic that interested him for the moment should also be interesting to her; while she, on her part, certainly received his advances in an equally amiable spirit, as her due.

This interested Stephen so far that he

began to notice the speech and appearance of the gentleman. The former indicated the Irishman. He had just that peculiarity which admits of no mistake as to nationality, nor of explanation; because it is so delicate as to its character, so refined, in a word altogether so charming. In person he was of good height and build, with a strong, dark, sombre face that puzzled Stephen when taken in connection with the pleasant nothings he had been saying to the lady whom he was seeing off, as Stephen thought.

But when again was heard the cry, 'Take your seats!' the gentleman got into the carriage, evidently a passenger with the lady.

There are times in life when any incident, however slight, is welcome to men who are weary of their own thoughts, and of a position that compels incessant going over and over the same intellectual ground, and coming only to the same disagreeable conclusion.

It was such a state of mind that caused Stephen to turn from himself for a moment to study these new arrivals. But instantly he had to retreat into the depths of the corner when the gentleman took from some receptacle unnoticed, a bottle and ornamental can, and pouring from one to the other, offered it to the lady, who whispered something familiarly in his ear; and immediately the gentleman very politely offered the can to Stephen as Irish whisky, with the apology he had heard Stephen ask a porter to tell him if there was time to get a cup of coffee.

Stephen as politely declined, by saying it was rather something to eat with the coffee that he had really wanted.

'Do take some; it will do you good,' said the lady confidentially, while turning round to look at him.

'You are very kind, but I am sure you will excuse me.'

He bowed, and turned away.

From that moment he strove to take

no further notice of the couple; but the task was by no means easy, as they conversed loudly — sitting opposite to each other — and having the rush and noise of the train perpetually breaking in.

Insensibly he began to speculate on her relations to the man. He was of middle age, but still seemed too young — too ardent — too acute in thought, and too scholarly in language to be her husband; so he judged them to be mother and son.

But his silence not suiting the lady's temper, she forced on a one-sided conversation, the object of which he speedily discovered was to tell him she and her husband had just been to London; were bringing home a dress that had cost *her* fifteen guineas; and that she so hated Dublin in particular, and Ireland in general, though born there and owning property there, that she was obliged to make these visits at times to the British metropolis.

Was it Stephen's imagination or a truth, that the husband winced under these revelations, while he so perfectly retained his equanimity, as to engage the lady's attention in a series of remarks that drew her from Stephen ?

Out of this grew a desire on Stephen's part to talk to him—perhaps, even if he saw a chance, to try to pick up some facts about the Curragh, and the life there that might be useful.

Stephen was himself an Irishman, though only by the accident of his birth ; for his father, the late earl, who had a large estate in the country, seldom resided there ; partly through diplomatic duties abroad, and partly through some distaste he took to the country from being called an absentee ; and lastly from differences that arose between himself and his tenantry on the eternal subject of social warfare in Ireland—Rent.

But just before his birth, the countess had persuaded the earl to pay a visit

to Ireland, saying in her own sweet significant language to him,—

'Where the treasure is there should the heart be also.'

The husband understood and accepted the reproof, determined to be no longer an absentee, went to visit his tenantry, and among them Stephen was born. But the very day the countess was reported as able to travel they returned to England, in obedience to a Government call. Since then Stephen had never set foot in Ireland; and he consequently always spoke of himself as an Englishman.

Rapidly he reviewed all this—while thinking what questions he should first put to the Irishman in the corner by the door; and nothing better occurring to him, he said, bending towards the gentleman,—

'Pray, have you ever been to Gualtmore?' asked Stephen, mentioning the name of the mansion where he was born.

The sympathetic tone of the voice, the chance at last of a talk with one who looked so likely to be interesting, but, above all, the question itself—so strongly appealed to the gentleman that he met more than half way Stephen's advance, leaned over towards him, and began at once a conversation that never ceased or flagged for a moment in interest to both, till they reached Holyhead, where the pair were to stay for the night to rest, and cross the Channel next morning.

'Have I ever been to Gaultmore?' he reiterated, with a smile. 'Have I not; and more than once. And wouldn't I like to go again? Have you been there?'

'I was in the neighbourhood very early in life before I had eyes to see—or sense to understand—the things I have since been told about it.'

'Go to it, sir; go to it, if you are an artist, or have any taste for the picturesque! I see it now—the walls of the castle, sheer down, on the edge of a promontory jutting

out into the sea—where it is so wild, so fresh, and so full of character, that one seems instinctively to feel and to begin a new life, only to look upon it, and to listen, and to dream. It may seem strange to you, a stranger and an Englishman, that I, an Irishman, can scarcely speak the word —a new life—but there rises before me the vision of Ould Ireland, and once more I ask myself,—When is its new life to begin?'

'Are matters then so bad?' asked Stephen, whose own career made the word "new life" seem even more applicable to himself; as he remembered how little he knew and how little he had cared to ask about the condition of that country, from which his own family drew a large part of their income.

'Anyhow, it would be hard to see how they could be worse.'

'You refer to the Fenians?'

'Well, rather to those who make Fenians.'

'An unprofitable manufacture to engage in,' said Stephen, with a laugh.

His companion joined in for a moment, as if in good fellowship, but presently began to speak as from an overcharged breast, of the wrongs of Ireland, and his earnest, passionate eloquence moved Stephen greatly.

He reviewed the old state of things before the country was conquered, but solely to show how the people had a positive share and right in the land; in order to point the moral, that England, in using her conquest for the purpose of establishing her own land laws, which took away the people's rights, had made herself responsible for the misery and disaffection that ensued, and which nothing but a reversal of such policy could possibly remove.

'And this, you think is the way Fenians are manufactured?' said Stephen, after a pause, as he saw how wide a prospect was opening before him, and felt it was not

one for him to dally with—in his present condition.

The Irishman also paused, looking at Stephen's face the while with eyes that seemed to blaze with excitement, and desire to know how far he might trust his chance companion.

Patriotism overcame prudence, and he said, in low accents, his wife having fallen asleep,—

'Well, sir, I'll tell you. I don't know what or who you may be, or the nature of your business in Ireland; but I am one of the few among my countrymen who have never lost faith in Englishmen. And yet that's not true. I don't mind acknowledging I was myself a Fenian—for three days!'

'Really!' exclaimed Stephen. And then, moved by so apparently dangerous a confidence, he added, 'The subject is quite new to me; it interests me, and your confidence shall be sacred!'

'I am sure of that. I like your face. Well, I took the usual road. Seeing the

misery and helplessness, and utter hopelessness of remedy for the poor peasantry of my country, under English rule, I accepted the idea floating round me wherever I moved, and which may be put into few words,—There is a remedy, and it is, to drive the English out of Ireland. And pending the accomplishment of that end, to make her as uncomfortable as possible while she stays; to hamper her in her foreign relations whenever we see a chance; —and, in a word, to make war upon her—in the only ways open to us.'

'As an Englishman I must confess I think the programme is not attractive—nor very likely to be successful.'

'Well, sir, these were my views—and they got known to certain persons—so presently I received a hint that I might aid the cause. I was asked, Would I accompany a few friends of the same way of thinking to a place where I might see what was going on? I accepted eagerly, but on condition I was not committing

myself. There was some demur. But a friend said in my presence to another man who seemed to exercise some authority, "This is my friend. You can trust me, and I can trust him. I'd shoot him dead if he blabbed!" That settled the matter. I went. I shall name no place. We arrived at nightfall—were stopped by two sentinels, who would neither let me go forward nor go back till one of our party had satisfied them. Then we were directed to proceed. We did so, and reached a shed where I saw, to my surprise, above eighty men drilling, some with military weapons, some with pikes, and some with sticks, and all going through their drill with the strictest order, and in a silence that was only broken by the words of command, and the sound of their heavy tread in marching.

'I should tell you that among the men into whose society I had fallen, and by whom I had ultimately been persuaded to consider if I could cast in my lot with

them, I noticed one day a man whose dress seemed that of a tramp or beggar, it was so old, ragged, and dirty.

'Yet I saw marks of respect paid to him in the meeting—a purely casual one it seemed—which puzzled me, and I ventured a question.

'"Wait," was the answer, "you will know him well enough by-and-by."

'"Did that refer to this drill?" I asked myself. Looking through the ranks I vainly tried to discover the man, when suddenly I heard a voice at once so like the ragged man's, and yet so unlike in the powerful, stern dignity of its command, that I turned, and could scarcely believe my eyes. The man was there in supreme direction, but in the most magnificent uniform I ever beheld—green, blue, and gold. Your Government has never yet seen that uniform.

'The drill over, the men rapidly dispersed. Our party stayed to be introduced to the leader, who took us to a secluded inn in the neighbourhood, and we

spent the greater part of the night together.

'Drink unlocked the hearts of all present; and the leader, who had put off his uniform, and returned to his rags, became so outspoken in his views of the future, and about his dealings with the English, that I sickened to hear him, and asked myself, Must we be barbarians in order to be patriotic? Has any nation ever worked out its redemption by such means? And if that were so accomplished what a fearful dowry of hate must remain to create endless war afterwards between the two kingdoms. While, lastly, I asked myself, and what must be the condition of Ireland itself, after such an infernal revel of blood and slaughter?

'I went to the camp, sir, a Fenian. I came back cured. I married a good wife, and the boys accepted that as the reason for my falling off. Since then they have had enough to do to look after themselves, as you will find if you stay long over the water.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST PAUSE.

STEPHEN was no politician, and in that respect resembled most youths of his rank and prospects. But he had strong patriotic feeling, if only circumstances were sufficiently interesting to bring it out. He had also sagacity — it might almost be called an instinctive power—of insight into men and their motives, when he came personally into contact with them.

Now patriotism, such as he had been led to shape it in England, as directed towards Ireland, prompted so strong a feeling of abhorrence towards everything

bearing the taint of Fenianism, that he had been surprised to find himself listening to one who had actually been in its ranks, and with sympathy for the man; which he was only able to justify when he found at the end of his narrative that he had also very quickly left the ranks for ever.

They parted at Holyhead with mutual good wishes, Stephen feeling half-ashamed that while hearing so much of his companion's life and views, he had not in return confided one single fact that might enable the former to guess as to his position and objects in Ireland; or to obtain the slightest clue as to the character of the man to whom he had been so lavish in self-revelation.

'Ah, well,' thought Stephen, 'we may some day meet again, and I'll pay him back in his own coin!'

So while the three days' Fenian and his wife went to the hotel for the night, after a fresh attempt to induce their young fellow-traveller to accompany them, and so

all go across the Channel together comfortably the next morning, Stephen hurried to the steamboat, and again had brought home to him the contrast between his former as compared with his present state.

He had paused to glance into the luxurious saloon, and there thought for a moment — should he pay the difference, rest there, and let that be his last extravagance? Or should he go on to his proper third-class quarters, and so continue to prepare himself step by step for the inevitable downfall, perhaps degradation, that awaited him in all that concerned his habits of life, and tendencies to personal indulgence?

He turned and strode away, and had immediate reason to congratulate himself, for as he moved about—now in the darkness of the night, now in the gleams of the lamps of the packet—he passed a tall, stern-looking man on his way to the saloon, who was addressed as 'Colonel,' by a servant behind him, loaded with rugs and small matters of baggage.

'Colonel! Going to Ireland! Perhaps to the Curragh. Nice introduction if we had happened to get into talk before I knew his rank and vocation, and I then had to appear before him as one of the humblest of his Tommy Atkinses! Thank goodness I have escaped, and must run no such risk again.'

He sought, therefore, his proper place as a representative of the Tommy Atkins class; and found it among a miscellaneous crowd of men, women, and children, half-buried among their luggage, most of which could be carried by hand, and was no doubt thought too valuable to be trusted elsewhere.

The children were crying. Their mothers soothing or slapping; the men noisily discussing, and in some cases hotly differing about a variety of subjects in which Stephen found it impossible to take any interest, and so unconsciously allowed his thoughts to fly back to home.

Painfully now he wondered how his

mother was bearing his departure ; whether his brother was using the advantages of his position to secure Miss Vandeleur ; and above all, whether that young lady was still exciting herself from time to time by the reading or recollection of the fatal verse ?

Out of all this tangled web he could draw but one conclusion—that he abhorred himself for writing that verse, even though he had never dreamed of her seeing it.

He was a good sailor, so no sea-sickness troubled him. And by the time he reached Dublin, between ten and eleven at night, the conflict that like an undercurrent had been going on, whatever else might appear uppermost, from the moment he left London to the moment when he stepped upon the quay at North Wall, there ended ; and he felt and said to himself with something of peace and satisfaction,—

'The die is cast. I will not return.'

Yet it had been a trying struggle between pride and humiliation, self-indulg-

ence and self-chosen hardship ; the power to go back, handsomely apologise to Miss Vandeleur, then leave her to do and feel as she liked ; and the very different power that must be evoked to go forward, while knowing that he thus sacrificed his only chance of winning a charming, if somewhat faulty, girl—and with it independence in his own sphere, and a future that might be almost whatever he chose to make it.

But he did now finally decide to go on ; and that so sincerely, while thoroughly prepared for whatever might happen, that the consciousness infused peace of mind, and strength of will.

He was interrupted by a voice crying from the top of a car,—

'Shure, an' your honour will be wanting to go to ——' naming one of the most aristocratic Dublin hotels. 'And here's the car ready. Wait till I get down!'

'Thank you—no,' quickly responded Stephen, as he shouldered his portmanteau, and walked away into the obscurity

of the night, followed by the loud remark of the carman,—

'That young fellow is a bould imposthure! I took him for a gintleman.'

Stephen heard and laughed, but became uncomfortable about his appearance. He did not want to be taken for a gentleman; it would greatly add to his annoyance and difficulty. He must think of that!

When he lay down that night, it was in one of the humblest inns in the neighbourhood of the quay.

After counting his money, and finding that he had more than four pounds in his possession, he could not help saying to himself, with a laugh,—

'Did ever man enlist before with such a fortune in his pocket?'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISPOSAL OF THE PORTMANTEAU.

PERHAPS it was the consciousness of a little money to spare that caused Stephen, as he dressed in the morning, and looked down into a dingy, miserable street below, to ask himself whether he was going to let his one glimpse of the city, that he had read of as one of the finest in Europe, be only a glimpse of her back slums.

He could live very cheaply for two or three days in the lodgings he had got to, though the accommodation was wretched in the extreme; but then the poor old landlady didn't pretend it was any other,

and begged his honour's pardon that she was so badly able to entertain him.

The plea was irresistible, while he did stop. But he began once more to retrace the old ground; should he take this last indulgence; this last bit of freedom; and then—

But his pleasure of former days—the baffling men, in their excuses for indulgence by strokes of satire that operated like an electric flash on the darkness of the motive alleged, now returned to plague or benefit the inventor.

With a smile of unusual bitterness, as though full of half a hundred recollections that were galling him, he suddenly called for and paid his little bill, and was ready for the last stage of his momentous journey.

What was he to do with his portmanteau? There were in it the choicest and most useful articles of his wardrobe, carefully selected before leaving home; besides many elegant and some costly

appliances of a dressing-case, and a writing-case.

There were still more precious things among the contents. Letters from his deceased father; letters from his mother; and letters from Miss Vandeleur; each chosen from a large mass of the most precious of his small worldly stock of correspondence.

He attempted to glance over them. The admirable good sense that made every touch a permanent intellectual effect in those of his father; the delicious outpouring of love in his mother's, but always accompanied by some fear, suggestive of danger against which he must be warned, conveyed in language so sweet —it seemed to read like a strain of poetry to Stephen, even while he was trying to nurse the feeling of his own wrongs from her; and lastly, the ever short notes of Miss Vandeleur, which irresistibly tempted the reader to ask,—'Why doesn't she go on?' All these now moved him more

deeply than ever, though only catching here and there, in his rapid survey, sentences that told him the nature of the context.

These, at least, could not possibly be risked in the camp. He did not know but there would be a place and persons appointed to take possession of any property belonging to a recruit, to be returned to him at a suitable future time.

All else he might have risked, but not these letters. So he took out such few articles as were likely to be most useful to him, and which he might carry about with him unnoticed, then repacked the remainder.

Not knowing what he was to do with the portmanteau for secrecy and safety during possibly a lengthened period, he at once shouldered the burden, and pledged it at the nearest pawnbroker's for a pound, after showing the contents, and paying a clerk extra for making out a list.

As apart from the appearance of the

bringer, no robbery could be in question, and as the latter explained that he was travelling on foot to see the country and did not want to move his luggage about, the pawnbroker asked no questions; but volunteered to lend five pounds instead of one, which was politely declined.

This accomplished, he reached the station, took his ticket for Newbridge, and waited the coming of the train, wondering if he should have any companions bent on the same errand.

CHAPTER IX.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW.

A CURIOUS thought occurred to Stephen as he watched with curiosity every station he passed through; and between the stations gazed from side to side upon the open country with eager interest.

It seemed to him he was looking with new eyes upon everything; and that the weary feeling of life that had of late often overcome him, was giving place to something like zest, though whether it was to bring him more of pain than enjoyment, he could not tell.

The fact, however, was pleasant in itself,

and helped with the beauty of the morning to greatly raise his spirits; so that it was with a decidedly cheerful aspect and manner he leaped lightly out of the train at Newbridge, which was the stopping place for the camp.

A group of soldiers, mostly in Highland uniform, were on the platform. They were all very young men like himself—mostly with good-looking faces, radiant with fun and frolic, whisking their fancy sticks about, and addressing jokes to the newly-arrived passengers. One of their number, who had been drinking, began to challenge Stephen, who was pausing a little apart to notice them.

'Well, old fellow, how do you like us, eh? We're a jolly lot, ain't we, now?' Then turning to a comrade he added, pointing with his thumb at Stephen, 'More grist to the old mill, eh? Will he stand treat?'

Here he was stopped by hiccups, and by a whisper from his comrade, which

caused him to become suddenly serious, and to look at Stephen with mingled fear and respect.

Stephen understood the comrade thought he might be an officer, and that it were well to be on the safe side, so had warned the tipsy man, whom he drew away.

This was annoying. And as Stephen left the station he questioned himself whether he had not better at once find some sheltered corner, and begin the work of outward personal degradation. And yet it seemed too absurd.

A crazy vehicle waited outside that had been brought to the station on its way to fetch some luggage from the camp; and of which by some strange conjunction of events the present regular omnibus almost seems to be a humble imitator and representative.

Once more he was appealed to as 'his honour' to take a place for the Curragh.

Stephen did look into it—as if in doubt,

but really from a sense of amusement at the sight of the wondrous interior. The original fabric had become so dilapidated that it could only be kept together and made endurable for travellers by patching on a large scale—with leather on one side —through which already had been worn or made somehow a hole that an arm might go through, while over other and still larger gaps were plates of tin—the supply of leather having failed. In the bottom lay a mass of straw, so dirty that it could only be likened to the contents of a stable that had been long forgotten to be cleaned out.

'Will yer honour get in? Going directly.'

'No, thanks, I want a walk. How far is it to the camp?'

'About three miles.'

'Along that road in front of us?'

'Yes.'

'Easy to find?'

'Hard to miss.'

'All right!' And then putting two-

pence in the driver's hand, and taking another longing, lingering view of the interior of the omnibus, Stephen walked off.

He soon found himself in a charming road, bordered by trees most of the way, and winding picturesquely in parts. A road that in winter becomes as dilapidated in its own fashion, as the omnibus is at all times.

But now it was revelling in sunshine, in embowering foliage, and in the songs of birds; and Stephen's heart seemed to become vocal in sympathy.

He felt as if all things around and within him were sanctioning and confirming his purpose; and he was too content with the result to give way to any of his ordinary speculative bantering incredulities.

At last a glimpse of the Curragh and of the camp broke upon his sight.

How he would like to get a good view before he went further! There was a tree beside him, with a fork at a convenient

height. In a few seconds he had mounted, and could then command a tolerable view of the whole.

The Curragh, he saw, formed a wide stretch of undulating country, green under foot but treeless, though once a forest; circled in the distance by hills, in places rising to the height and dignity of mountains;—one of them being the second only in altitude of all the mountains in Ireland.

Occupying the centre of this expanse, for the space of a mile or so in every direction, he saw the camp formed by lines of low wooden huts, their dull character relieved by the white tents of the soldiery, brought here for the summer only.

Masses of red-coats were marching in the distance; and from other parts rose the sound of military music, which, always inspiring, came to Stephen's ear and soul like the sound of that trumpet which he remembered to have read of in Sir Philip Sidney.

On he went, thinking only now how he must act, how shape out a military

character worthy of his own position and prospects, if once he righted himself by the manful conquest of a commission, obtained through every obstacle, and perfectly unaided in the getting.

That was now his ambition—his sole aim. To it he resigned for a time every other aspiration and hope.

He soon reached what was evidently the front road of the camp—got so near that he could see the soldiers in their varying uniforms, passed the officers' huts, divided by a road from the men's, and marked by low white stones on the ground; and at last came opposite a square space, where recruits in different squads were being drilled. Every detail interested Stephen. Some of the men had not yet got their uniforms. Eagerly he tried to make out if there were any at all like himself—possible future companions — with whom to make a little oasis in the desert of military life, such as he expected for a time to find it.

He saw not one that by any stretch of fancy he could suppose ever to have supposed himself a gentleman.

Noticing their weapons, he perceived only a few had rifles, others were carrying about large clubs, one in each hand; while yet others bore small boards, which from time to time they lifted over their heads, and brought down behind their backs. Many were marching, more fortunate than their comrades, who were only permitted to pretend to march, by practising the goose step.

While Stephen's eyes and thoughts were thus deeply engrossed — so deeply that he quite forgot he might himself be in the way of notice from others that he was not exactly prepared for, a sergeant came up, and entered into conversation with him. In the course of this, he told him the police would presently be demanding his business. The camp, he said, was private property, belonging to the Secretary of State for War; no one

was allowed there without a pass, and trespassers were liable to be prosecuted. He ended by pointing to the hut of the Provost-Marshal.

This was not exactly the kind of introduction to the camp Stephen had planned. However, he smiled, apologised for his ignorance, which he hoped would be excused, for he had come from England to enlist.

Marvellous became the change in the soldier's behaviour. He looked at Stephen's dress and attitude, as if to realise his mistake in thinking he was simply an impudent amateur gentleman, who thought he had only to walk in, look about, and walk out again.

Then seeing he was at all events a good-looking, well-dressed, and altogether likely recruit, he smiled in response, shook Stephen's hand warmly, and then began an acquaintance which was destined to colour seriously our young hero's military life.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUEEN'S SHILLING.

'COME along with me,' said the sergeant, 'and I'll put you straight through. So, like many other men, you want to try your chance for glory?'

'I'm afraid there's not much of that falling to the share of the private soldier,' said Stephen, with a smile.

'Oh, I don't know, great men have come out of the ranks.'

'That's interesting. Would you kindly mention them?'

'Oh, I don't remember now. But if

glory proves scarce there's nice pickings to be got.'

'By the private?'

'Well, not often. Beauty and booty did fall to his lot once now and then. But those were in the old times.'

'Then by the non-commissioned officers?'

'Well, here's a case in point. I am a non-commissioned officer, and I shall get half-a-guinea for the pleasure of taking a first-rate recruit to enter into the service of Her Majesty.'

'But that's an accident.'

'Well, we have many privileges. Our quarters are good. We may get to be sergeant-majors, and still better—quarter-masters.'

'Is that the routine through which a lucky private may hope to pass ultimately to a commission?' asked Stephen, in a tone that was carefully modulated to imply no special interest in the answer.

Sergeant Grabbe, for that was his

rank and name, turned, and looked in Stephen's face, as though he had made a discovery. The latter met the look so well, that the sergeant appeared satisfied, and merely said,—

'You are a young man. I like the look of you. But have a care. Neither officers nor men take kindly to a fellow who thinks himself above his station.'

'I think myself below mine,' said Stephen, very humbly, but with a certain enjoyment of the double meaning.

'Oh, you'll do. And now, will you join my regiment, the —th, the best-dressed corps in the whole camp! Good officers.'

'Certainly, I should not think of choosing any other,' said Stephen, with a half bow.

'Come, then, to our sergeant-major, get through some business with him, and then you shall join my company. I am engaged for a time on special duty, but shall be rejoining in a day or two, and will look after you.'

Wondering how much of this making things pleasant belonged to the period before enlistment, and would disappear afterwards, Stephen trudged on by the sergeant's side to the hut of the sergeant-major, which stood nearly alone in an open square in the centre of the camp.

The sergeant knocked at the door, and was answered in a loud, stern voice from the sergeant-major,—

'Come in!'

'If you please, sir,' said the sergeant, as he entered with Stephen, 'I have brought a recruit to be enlisted.'

'Let him stand forward,' was the response, in still harsher tones; which, however, evidently came as the natural expression of the man's habit, meaning nothing in particular, except some shadowy idea of discipline. For Stephen, as he advanced, saw he looked placidly enough, and therefore recovered his own equanimity.

'So, my boy, you have come to enlist? You want to serve Her Majesty. Ah,

that's something like an ambition. I enlisted in the same way—and you see me here! I am glad you have chosen the —th regiment. You'll find you're in luck in so doing. Pay attention to your drill, behave yourself like a man who respects his superiors, and you'll get promotion. Now, come with me to the orderly room.'

Stephen followed him, studying on the way his character by the few indications given. He foresaw how important might be a right understanding of the temper, disposition, and ways of thinking of both the men he had now come in contact with, his sergeant, and the still more important sergeant-major, the virtual commandant of the company under, and in the absence of, the commissioned officers. But again he reminded himself —all this must be a matter of course till the recruit was fast bound; and it would be as well for him to watch, and be prepared for a disagreeable change thereafter.

The sergeant-major led the way into a room, where some clerks were sitting at their desks; and Stephen could not but notice how they stared at him, then resumed their work, but only again to stare. The something indefinable about him interested them, perhaps only because he was so unlike the strain of men that habitually passed through.

The first hour of humiliation had come for Stephen. He was told by the sergeant-major to take off his coat, his under-shirt, and fasten up his trousers with his braces.

Again the clerks forgot their writing to see how the 'swell' bore this in so public a room.

Stephen obeyed mechanically, hardly knowing what for. He was then measured with a tape round the chest, and found all right.

He was next told to dress himself, and when he had done so was measured under the standard. The height being sufficient,

the sergeant-major took a shilling from his purse.

'Put out your right hand, my fine lad, and I will give you the Queen's Shilling —the best you ever had, I'll be bound!'

Stephen put out his hand.

'Before I give you this, you must answer a few questions.

He then, after asking Stephen his name (which he gave as Stephen Shand), his place of business, his age, and about other comparatively unimportant matters, proceeded as follows :—

'Are you free, willing and able to serve Her Majesty the Queen for a period of ten years?'

'Yes,' said Stephen firmly.

'Will you also serve Her Majesty for a further period of two years if a state of war exists between Her Majesty and any foreign or colonial power?'

'Yes,' responded Stephen, carefully weighing the sergeant-major's words.

'Do you belong to any other regiment?'

'Certainly not!'

'Say no—that's enough,' remarked the sergeant-major, irritably.

'No.'

'Do you belong to the militia or any other corps?'

'I do not.'

'Can't you say simply—No?'

'No.'

'Are you married?'

'No.'

The sergeant-major here condescended to explain that married men were not enlisted, but marriage was granted as a privilege to good old soldiers after so many years' service.

For the life of him Stephen could not help ironically connecting this inestimable privilege for himself with the image of Miss Vandeleur, but only to his own extreme annoyance.

'Do you know anything the matter with you to prevent your joining the army?'

'No.'

'There, then, is the shilling. You are now enlisted.'

This done the sergeant-major gave Stephen a notice paper containing the foregoing questions and the answers by their side; and told him he would have to go to the hospital next morning at nine to pass the doctor, in company with the orderly-corporal, who conducted the sick.

Finally, he was informed that if he failed to attend, or had made false answers to any of the questions put to him, he would be treated as a rogue and a vagabond, and prosecuted accordingly as the law directs.

And with that brief and sharp warning that he was, indeed, committed beyond recall to the life, duties, and disagreeables, however heavy, of the private soldier, Stephen was dismissed to his next experience—the barrack-room of the sergeant's company, whither he was now taken.

CHAPTER XI.

STEPHEN'S FUTURE COMRADES.

THE sergeant took the new, but as yet unfledged, soldier over to the hut occupied by his company, and told the sergeant in charge of it Shand was to remain there by order of the sergeant-major. He then went away, and Stephen was left to confer alone with the inmates of the barrack-room, and submit himself to their tender mercies.

He sat down, hat in hand, on a long form, feeling a little depressed at the loss of his late acquaintance; who, whatever he might hereafter prove, had certainly

been reasonably considerate and friendly so far.

Presently he began to look around and take notice of the small bedsteads and beds—one of which was to be his—the rifles in rows at each end of the room, and the various orderly contrivances for the knapsacks, soldiers' kits, and small individual properties.

Just then a coarse, brutal-looking soldier, whose face and lower jaw struck Stephen as marvellously resembling a pig's jowl, stopped opposite to him and spoke.

'Hillo! Are you a 'cruity just come? Why, you look more like a piany man' (a soldier's expression of contempt for any one who does not come up to his ideas of manliness) 'than for this sort of rough life. Why didn't you stop with your mother? Well, never mind. Mind, I will bone you for those flash boots you have got on when you get your ammunitions' (which include the uniform).

'Well, but, my good friend, does it not

occur to you that if I can't wear them here, you are in the same predicament. And as they happen to belong to me, I propose to keep them.'

Whether or no the answer was different from what he expected, the soldier became in his way gracious.

'Come up to the front. We shall soon have dinner. I suppose you can bolt lots of that?'

'I will try,' said Stephen, with a smile. 'I own to being hungry.'

'Don't imagine it will be up to the fine living you have been used to, judging from your fine clothes.'

'Are you content with it?' asked Stephen, diplomatically.

'Oh, it's well enough for the likes of us.'

'Then I am sure it shall be well enough for the likes of me,' responded Stephen.

'And if it weren't,' retorted the soldier, 'it would be all the same for both of us. To please us isn't their game.'

'So I suppose,' said Stephen. 'And I shall try like you to take things philosophically.'

The soldier looked hard at Stephen, as if not quite sure whether this was meant as a compliment to him, or as a skit at his expense, but he finally decided it was all right.

Just then the dinner came in. Stephen thought of his last dinner at his club in Piccadilly, only three days before, and prepared rather to enjoy the contrast. A large can full of soup and meat was placed on the rough deal table, in the centre of the room, round which the soldiers sat with their small tin vessels called canteens. In these they received their soup, while the meat and unpeeled potatoes were placed on the canteen lids. Rough as everything was, spare as were the condiments, conspicuous by its absence the tablecloth, Stephen never ate a more enjoyable dinner.

When he had done, and could find time

to look around and study the faces, the expressions, the language, and the behaviour of his future comrades, the society he had voluntarily exchanged for the so-called 'good society' to which he naturally belonged, the impression left was painfully depressing.

It was not that he admired 'good society' any better than before, but the contrast was terrible between that and this; when he remembered that he could have left the former when he liked, whereas to the latter he was bound as by links of iron.

Vainly did he try to discover in the hard-headed, hard-faced, close-cropped animal features about him, one single being with whom it seemed possible to hold some kind of friendly talk, some small letting free of mutual confidences.

'Well, I expected even that—did I not?' And so saying he relapsed into his own thoughts, and was happily left pretty well alone with them till tea time.

Then the man who had threatened to bone his boots came again with his own canteen of tea, and gave Stephen a drink. At the first taste he was about to put it down, but his good sense checked the movement, so he drank, and thanked his entertainer.

At the same time he received from the soldier a small piece of hard ration bread, with the explanation that he only got a pound to last him the whole day, and this was the end of it. The bread was worse than the tea to manage, but he was determined to give no chance to any of the men to say he was putting himself above them, so ate his hard dry bread with apparent content.

At half-past nine all went to bed. Stephen found the feather bed or luxurious spring mattresses and down quilts of Harlaxton House, had now to be exchanged for a little straw on a hard iron frame, with a coarse blanket and a rug for covering. But there was an intense

relief in getting into even a bed like this. He had no longer to speak nor to be spoken to. He could resign himself to a review of the day; see how he had acquitted himself, how he had borne the things that most troubled him, and so look forward and prepare himself for the morrow,

And, alas! for the many morrows, that he knew, even by the talk he had overheard, must be gone through in hardship and humiliation before he could hope so to emerge as to be free from the things most painful to him; the subjection of his whole being (so it seemed) to the law possibly of some ignorant and brutal drill sergeant; and to the jealousies of the men around him, which, he felt sure, would be fiercely aroused at any sign he was advancing in the good opinion of his officers.

Ah—but what would *they* be like?

That colonel he had seen on the deck of the steamer, and fortunately not got into converse with? If, now, a man

with the look and voice of that colonel were there in the camp, as the head of his (Stephen's) regiment, how would he get on if he had to appeal to him?

'I may wrong him,' said Stephen to himself; 'but if I ever saw a man who I could fancy would feel a pleasure in the punishment he inflicted, it is he. Fortunately he at least is not my colonel—that much I do know.'

While thus ruminating, a strangely prolonged sound came to his ears from the open air. He thought at first it might be a cry of distress, and raised himself a little to listen. Presently he heard it again, but more faintly, and then again and again, at equal intervals of time, dying off in the distance by degrees.

When it ceased he lay down again wondering what it could have been. Presently he heard the faintest of the former sounds repeated, as though on the way back.

And so it proved. Each cry gradually

became more distinct, and it drew nearer, and at last, through a clearer, stronger voice being employed, he knew the meaning of the whole.

The sentinel at some point near Stephen's hut had called out the hour, and made known all was well. When his cry had quite ceased, the next sentinel took it up, and so it went round the whole camp, till it came back to the place from whence it started. Anything more striking or picturesque to the mental vision than this linked chain of voices, shutting in the whole camp in safety, Stephen thought he had never heard.

What if any man failed to respond when his turn came? What if, under some extraordinary circumstances, he had fallen asleep?

And then Stephen pictured to himself the behaviour of the guard for the night in their hut—the hurried turnout, after a brief pause to be sure there was a dead stop, the hurrying to the place, the wakening of the

unfortunate, the marching him away as a prisoner, and then the court-martial, and the dreadful punishment that would surely follow.

Should he, Stephen, ever be in that danger?

And then, instead of going to sleep he tried to summon up for examination all possible influences that might lead a man to yield to slumber, and see if any were likely to be specially dangerous to him.

Such was his last remembrance before sleep, for which he had long to wait. And when he did wake it was to experience another and less agreeable sensation in the form of a violent and most inexplicable shock.

A bullet passing through his brain could hardly have more affected him. And coming as the blow did between sleeping and waking, he was for a little time scarcely able to speak, or even to guess what had happened.

The immediate sound in all directions,

as though they waited till then, of bands, bugles, drums and fifes, followed by the rousing of the men, and a question Stephen put, and which was answered by the nearest soldier, enlightened him. It was the cannon that was always fired at half-past five as a signal, which had come upon him so apparently near, so sudden in its violence, and became so instantaneously still.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOCTOR'S EXAMINATION.

UP, washed and dressed, Stephen received his breakfast, namely, a pound of bread and a basin of cold coffee.

He could not but own to himself that he did then hunger for the fleshpots of Egypt —for some of the many savoury things he was accustomed to enjoy at his first meal of the day from Fortnum & Mason's. Even a solitary egg, or a mouthful of bacon, he felt were fast rising to the rank of luxuries, the greater and more tempting because unattainable.

However, this was a morning on which

he had other things to think about than pampering the appetite. At nine o'clock he was marched to the hospital, there ordered to strip himself bare of every particle of clothing in the presence of many soldiers; and as if that was not enough, he was so left standing for about ten minutes before being summoned to the doctor's presence, in a cold surgery.

Had Stephen been still free to elect, it may be doubted whether he would have borne this treatment; or whether he would not have coolly put on his clothes, told all present he 'had thought better of it,' made his bow, and passed over the threshold never to return.

But he had counted the cost as well as he could, and though this lay beyond all he had reckoned upon, he stifled his indignation, and went in, was examined, and passed.

This business of examination was, in a different way, almost as bad to be borne, though more reasonable in itself. He was

ordered to go through various movements, including a specimen of his hopping and jumping, which Stephen managed to pass through by accepting and to some extent enjoying its ridiculousness, while he kept the gravest face possible, saying to himself at the same time what he had more than once said under the torture of a tooth drawing,—

'There can't be much more of it, so keep quiet!'

Next day he was marched to the other side of the Curragh to be sworn in by the magistrate as a good and loyal soldier.

Then he was sent to the tailor's shop to be measured for his clothes; to the bootmaker's for his boots, and to the quarter-master for his kit.

While these were getting ready, he was summoned by an orderly to a more important meeting in the orderly-room, where he was to see the colonel. Stephen thought much of that meeting. He hoped

to perceive some kindly feeling in the face and manner of the commanding officer towards him, when he would notice, as he could hardly help doing, Stephen's face, clothes, person, and behaviour as at least unlike the bulk of the men under him.

After waiting a considerable time, the sergeant-major before mentioned came to march him before the colonel, and to inform the latter that this was the recruit he had enlisted the other day.

The colonel did not look unlike the sort of man Stephen desired so much to see; but he was aged, worn out in the service, and found it necessary to do what routine duty had to be done in the most formal routine manner, because the easiest.

Besides, he was reading some document that deeply interested him at the moment of Stephen's entrance, so that he scarcely gave himself, or Stephen, time for any but the most ordinary result.

He told Stephen he hoped he would

bear in mind that the first duty of a soldier was obedience; bade him take care of himself, do his duty, keep from bad company and drink, and then he would do well.

While Stephen was wondering if he might say even half-a-dozen words in grateful acknowledgment—

'Right turn! Quick—March!' says the sergeant-major; and so ended the interview with the colonel; from which Stephen had ventured to hope some little comfort to lessen the difficulties of the thorny path before him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST DRILL.

AFTER so many, and some of them unpleasant works of preparation, it was a relief to Stephen to be summoned to his first drill.

Of course he knew he would be put with the new recruits, and he schooled himself not to know anything, but be taught everything; and it was with a laugh he thought to himself how he might win his teacher's heart by his docility, and rapid progress.

For as to the thing itself, Stephen felt certain he could learn faster than there would be men intelligent enough to teach

him. But it was a settled point of policy with him to appear as raw as his comrades —without, however, any kind of actual deception.

He found the others nearly all like himself, in plain clothes, and the drill began under Drill Corporal Robinson. They marched straight forward; they turned to the right; they turned to the left; they stood at ease; they practised the goose step (engaged in which the wisest of men could hardly help feeling uncommonly foolish); and through all Stephen acquitted himself as a good average man.

This went on for four days, when he was ordered to the quarter-master's stores for his clothing, boots and kit.

And then for the first time did Stephen put on his uniform; and the same day displayed it on parade before the commanding officer and adjutant, who came, attended by the master tailor, to inspect the recruits in their martial garb.

Now, whether Stephen forgot his caution, or did not chance to remember it, he looked so well, and so carried himself, without any sign of intention or display, that the colonel, in 'passing' him, to use the technical phrase, spoke of him as a smart lad—one likely to get on. Sweet and precious were the words; they sank into Stephen's heart, and gave him new strength and fortitude for his career.

That very day he was moved into the next, a superior squad, so that the praise and the pudding came together, as Stephen said, with a glee and light-heartedness he had not known for many a day. This, however, was partly due to good luck. A great number of soldiers of the regiment had recently volunteered to join other regiments where reinforcements were needed for special duty, and likely recruits therefore were pushed on.

He needed some break in the cloud, and it had come.

He needed it—because another cloud

was overhanging him. When he undressed at night he found that all the clothes he had taken off, to put on his uniform, were gone; and in answer to his indignant questions, and then demands, he got nothing but jeers from some, insults from others, and angry shouts from men who were reading or listening to a newspaper, to bid him hold his jaw, or it would be worse for him!

Something was worse for him. Remembering the threat about his boots, which, after all, had perhaps been only barrack fun, or, at the worst, trying it on, to see what the new recruit would stand, he had taken everything out of the pockets, and watching his opportunity to shake up his straw bed when no one seemed to notice him, deposited the more valuable of the contents, and the whole of his little store of money, a few shillings excepted, below the bed; where he thought no one would look for it, while seeing his clothes in their

usual place; and if they did go to them, finding his money and other small matters seemingly left there in confidence, would search no farther.

It was shrewdly thought—but his was one man's experience under entirely new circumstances; whereas his comrades had the experience derived from long habitude, as well as from individual sharp practice. The upshot was that everything was cleaned out. Below the bed, and about the bed, all was in the same category—Stephen had lost everything.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT THE ROBBERY LED TO.

IN the midst of the noise and confusion Sergeant Grabbe came in, and obtained silence.

Then Stephen told what had happened, moderating as well as he could the anger he felt, while as to his still stronger sense of disgust, he knew that must be mastered altogether.

When he had done, the sergeant said,—

'I'm sorry; it's a bad job. If you had asked me to take care of your money, I would have done it with pleasure!'

'So would any of us,' shouted out the jester of the barrack-room, and was re-

warded as usual with a burst of laughter, in which the sergeant joined, and Stephen himself could scarcely refrain.

He was tickled with the charming innocence of the suggestion, which in his heart he believed was not merely the soldier's fun, but a stroke of satire against the sergeant's habits, which the whole barrack-room were thus able to join in without risk.

'Let the affair drop,' said the sergeant, after a pause, and coming a little nearer to Stephen, so that he might not be overheard. 'Those who may know, won't tell. The worst thing one soldier can say or think of another is that he tells tales.'

'Pardon me, sergeant, I don't think I ought to submit to such a flagrant case of robbery.'

'You are unwise to use such words. They, perhaps, don't think it is robbery. Only a kind of loot, they fancy they have some sort of right too, if only the right of having themselves been served the same

way. A sort of robbing Peter to pay Paul, Paul having been robbed to begin with.'

'Do you wish me to understand, sergeant, there is really no redress?'

'By no means. I'll take down your charge if you like; or you can go direct to the captain, and tell him by word of mouth all your wrongs.' Then he drew still nearer, and whispered, 'Mind, if you begin you can't stop. When too late you may wish to do so. Can you prove you had this money?'

'No.'

'There now. Suppose the very fellows who have got your money came forward as witnesses to swear they knew you had none?'

'How would they manage that?'

'Say, perhaps, they asked you, as a comrade, to help till pay-day, and you swore you had none.'

'I see. The men who rob—no, who relieve me of my money would be quite

equal to the subsequent duties the affair might impose upon them.'

'That's about it,' said the sergeant, 'and I am glad to find you take so sensible a view; for if the job were pushed on to the end, you might find, whether you succeeded or not, the barrack-room too hot to hold you. And then where would you be?'

'Very true. Would you then mind making it known that if the gentlemen who have kindly taken care of my money will only come forward and say so, I shall request them to keep it for my sake, and once more be all brothers together?'

The sergeant laughed heartily before he could say,—

'Do you really mean it?'

'I do.'

'Very well.'

Then turning to the soldiers, he shouted, 'Attention! Men, Shand makes a proposal that you can't object to, because you are not obliged to carry it out. He wants

no tell-tales.' Here there was a burst of applause. 'But he wants to know his friends. Well, I say we are all his friends. Ay, but he says his particular friends; the men who, knowing he has no means of spending here, have taken a care off his back in taking his money. Let them come forward, and they may keep the money, and he won't say a word more about it.'

There was a dead silence as the men pondered over that mystical announcement, which was promptly put an end to when the jester again lifted his voice from a far corner.

'He only wants to put a little salt on your tails, so come, boys, come!'

The mirth was now uproarious. And Stephen having got rid of the perilous stuff that at first weighed on his breast, laughed with the rest, and as the men calmed down, he stepped out, and said aloud,—

'Brother soldiers, to show there is no

bad feeling left on either side, let me shake hands with half-a-dozen of you, as representing all the rest.'

It was a happy stroke, and thoroughly successful. Most of the men shook hands with him, the others looking on in sympathy, and from that apparently evil hour Stephen began to feel the sweets of popularity. He was treated thenceforward with marked respect and deference; and consulted whenever any special subject caused a commotion in the barrack-room, that only a man like the 'Swell' could allay.

CHAPTER XV.

SERGEANT O'SHAUGHNESSY.

STEPHEN had accepted his advance to another squad as a sort of intimation that fortune had not quite forgotten him; but he found the value of her bounty considerably impaired by the conditions that accompanied it.

Sergeant O'Shaughnessy was the drill-master—a bad-tempered man naturally—but who could be mollified and made amiable by certain little attentions, such as the price of a pint of porter after drill, or a timely gift of something else if money ran short.

But that to him pleasant custom neglected, you had better look to yourself when the next drill time came. Oaths would fly about you in your every attempt to do rightly what he directed, and if this violence did not set you in the way he wanted or did not want you to go, or to hold yourself, he would, before he had done with you, make you a fool or a guy for the great laughter of all the others.

Stephen had heard something of this but did not believe it. It seemed too shocking, too unjust, and above all too injurious to the service for any man, however greedy, to venture on.

On the first day under O'Shaughnessy things looked so well that Stephen was pleased. He was paid special attention to; his half-intentional faults quite kindly pointed out, and the grizzled, weezle-faced old soldier quite warmed to find all he said was so carefully attended to, and so promisingly carried into effect.

'Shand, you'll do,' he said at the close.

And Shand was so pleased that he felt it impossible to degrade the character of the pleasure—for both of them—by anything so mean as a bribe—or aught that might be taken for a bribe.

Next day Stephen found a great change. He did not get on half so well; the sergeant's directions seemed often contradictory; he got bothered, and then O'Shaughnessy came down upon him in a volley of the choicest abuse that can be found even in a drill-sergeant's vocabulary.

After this he seemed to grow milder, and Stephen improved in consequence.

While he was trying whenever he dared, even for a moment, to take his eye or his thought from O'Shaughnessy to think of his behaviour, he found the latter, not content with directing him how to hold himself, used his hand somewhat roughly to carry conviction more promptly home to his person;—and once he clapped his hand upon his pockets in a manner that told

Stephen he was inquiring as to their contents.

Now, as that could hardly be for the purposes of the drill, Stephen had no alternative but to conclude he was trying whether there was anything to bribe with.

It must be here explained that Stephen had drawn comfort after the loss of his money in the barrack-room, from the remembrance that he had then his bounty money still to receive. Perhaps O'Shaughnessy had learned of his loss, and was now seeking to discover whether the bounty money was in hand. At all events he heard something, possibly keys, when he tapped; and very soon afterwards he came again to Stephen, and looking him scrutinisingly in the face, said, to the unutterable surprise of Stephen,—

'Shand, you are getting on the best in the squad to-day. I shall recommend you soon to a higher squad. But I see our discipline has been a little rough to you. You do not look well.'

Stephen was about to answer he was perfectly well, but O'Shaughnessy took him up hastily, saying,—

'That'll do. I can see. Never mind thanking me. Fall out!'

Of course Stephen fell out, very much perplexed, but waited about. When the drill was over, and the men were dispersing, the sergeant came to him and said,—

'Are you going canteen way?'

'I am going any way,' replied Stephen, beginning to feel uncomfortable.

'I heard of your loss, and I thought, "Well, now, what greedy rascals there are in this world!" Take care you are not caught twice. Look sharp after your bounty money. And always keep enough by you for a pint of porter for yourself, and for a friend. So mind your bounty money!'

The words about the friend were so emphasised it was impossible to mistake their meaning. So there was an anxious moment while Stephen considered what to

say, for he had already received the bounty money, and expended it; partly in charges for stoppages that he had no notion he would have to pay, but chiefly in treating the men, which, he was told, was an invariable custom, and who got his last sixpence.

'Unfortunately, sergeant,' he said, 'the bounty money has been taken too good care of.'

And he explained how.

'What! All gone?' asked O'Shaughnessy, with a smile that reminded Stephen, who delighted in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, of

'The smiler with the knife under the cloak.'

'I have not even left myself enough for a pint of beer; or to ask you, sergeant, as I intended, if you would allow me the honour of presenting you with a little tobacco.'

'All right, my boy; good-night!'

As they separated, Stephen said to himself,—

'Pity he has such an ugly smile, for I think, after all, he means well enough, but has such a devil of a temper. Possibly, when he has been lashing out at me, it's because of the stupidity of half-a-dozen others, which he fears to make worse by confusing them. Ah, well, when I get away from him, and into a still better class, I go to fresh woods and pastures new.'

O'Shaughnessy at the next drill didn't care to conceal from all that he was, for once, in a very bad temper. Now, the consequences fell upon this unfortunate, now upon that; and Stephen was half inclined to think he was to be specially favoured in being the only man in the squad to escape the sergeant's amiabilities of word and manner.

But O'Shaughnessy was a consummate artist in his vocation. The poor wretches who were shivering under his treatment of their dulness and awkwardness, might have been somewhat comforted could they have known the truth; that he was not

even thinking of them but of the swell; for whom he was carefully preparing—first, by seeming not to be doing so; and, secondly, by enhancing Stephen's anticipations of his own particular good fortune, and then—

He came to Stephen, and struck him on the back to make his chest stand out. Then on the stomach, to make that retire in. Saluting him with such remarks as,—

'Can't you just manage to do one thing right? Try, you counter-jumper! I am wondering what brought you here, among soldiers. Your place is the hawkward squad of the Kildare Militia. Will you keep your hands back? They are flying about like the sails of a cracked old windmill.'

Here he gave Stephen a smart cut with his cane, first on one hand, and then on the other, causing Stephen to utter an exclamation partly of pain, partly of anger.

'There, now, you have run your hugly hand against my pace stick. Now mind!

If you open your mouth I'll jump down your throat, stick and all.'

As it happened, the adjutant was near, and noticing something amiss from the attitude of the two men, he came up, and made inquiry.

The sergeant reported the statement he had taken care to prepare beforehand in case of need (knowing this kind of thing was not permitted), that Stephen had struck his hand against the pace stick.

Stephen was about to speak, but was stopped by the sergeant's—

'Silence! No talking in the ranks.'

The adjutant pretty well understood O'Shaughnessy's character; but he was found useful in drilling the rough recruits, so left very much to take his own way. The drill proceeded, the adjutant looking on apparently quite satisfied with O'Shaughnessy's explanation; and Stephen, forgetting everything but the presence of the adjutant, held himself—and moved—so well in all the exercises, that as the drill

ended, the adjutant, addressing Stephen, said, rather severely,—

'Whatever you may think, I can see you have had a good drill-master in Sergeant O'Shaughnessy;' and saying no more he went away.

The very next morning he caused Stephen to be removed from the sergeant's tender mercies, and advanced to a higher class, which entitled him to receive his rifle.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WINNER OF THE PRIZE.

TO have escaped the mercenary and brutal tyranny of O'Shaughnessy, and at the same time to have risen a very decided step in his drill, were facts pleasant to reflect on. But even more full of hope and promise did the adjutant's kindly but wise interference seem to Stephen.

He began from this moment to enter with zest into his duties, which primarily consisted of mastering the bayonet and firing exercises. These he accomplished in an unusually short period; when on the recommendation of Sergeant-Major Cross,

who had kept his eye on Stephen all along, he was moved on to the first, or final drilling-class.

But taught by painful experience to expect some reverse after every success, he disciplined his mind, while others were disciplining the body; and kept himself prepared for disagreeables, sometimes wondering what they would be.

Cooking was one of them. But he managed to get through without actual disgrace.

But the worse deep he had to plunge into, the greatest shock to his taste, the most revolting to his sense of personal dignity, was the coal carrying. Imagine a number of men with boxes beside a great heap of coal, that has been shot down for them to dispose of. Black grimy figures, and faces smeared with the sweat from the labour, carrying the loaded basket to varying distances, amounting at times to as much as a quarter of a mile, and this continued for a considerable time.

It was not simply that Stephen thought how easily there might be contrivances found to lesson alike the labour and the foulness of the occupation, but he wondered how the authorities could bear to see the practical standing of the soldier, as an important member of the Commonwealth, so lowered. To put an ideal flag of glory into one hand, and an actual coal box into the other, in which to drag coals about hour after hour, struck him as a ludicrous, but also a painful and degrading inconsistency.

However, he bent his back to that burden as well as to all the others, and with it accomplished a still harder task, he held his tongue the while.

The last steps of his drill were now begun. Company skirmishing; battalion drill; the recruit's course of musketry; the eight-day position drill; and then the firing in large numbers.

While practice in these matters was going on, an interesting incident occurred.

The musketry inspector made it known that he would give a valuable prize to the best shot out of the two hundred and eighty-nine recruits, who had reached the same point as Stephen.

Nothing from this time was talked of in the hut, among the recruits, but this prize, and the men who were thought the likeliest to win.

Day by day, as they returned from the rifle range, new men who had done well in the day were pitted against those who had been conspicuous before; but presently one man, who had not been at first conspicuously successful, was found to be rising fast.

The excitement was increased when Stephen's own captain, Etheredge, added a new prize to the former one.

Hotter than ever waxed the contest between some four or five competitors, who had gradually distanced all the rest. But the one man before mentioned, who had silently crept on till he was ahead,

now kept ahead, and eventually was declared the winner of both the prizes.

Need it be said who that man was?—Stephen.

No winner at the antique Olympian games felt more proud than he; nor could have been more enthusiastically honoured at the close by the assembled multitude of red coats. One happy day had come at last to compensate for all he had suffered.

And then came the congratulations of the officers; Captain Etheredge the first, who shook him warmly by the hand. Then the musketry instructor, and the non-commissioned officers who had drilled him, and among the rest Sergeant O'Shaughnessy.

At the sight of him Stephen's proud humility, his eloquently modest silence, was broken through; and while shaking hands with him, he found it barely possible to keep from a hearty laugh.

'Well, my boy,' said the drill sergeant, 'you see I did the job for you!'

And Stephen could not but leave the flattering unction in his soul undisturbed.

Our young soldier now joined the ranks of his company. The next day he was warned for garrison guard, and then fulfilled, for the first time, the duty of garrison sentry. To that succeeded regimental guard. The men composing this are very strictly inspected, and the smartest man among them is selected as the colonel's orderly. This is considered a great honour, and brings with it important privileges.

It is amusing to see the zeal of the men in the extra cleaning of their belts and general brightening up of every part of their uniform before the parade, when the business of selection is about to take place. The disengaged men—those who may be said to have dropped out of the running—will gather round to try if they can guess beforehand the lucky soldier.

Stephen was again to the front in the estimation of these critics, but not alone.

Another man was considered to stand just as good a chance. And great was the excitement among their comrades of the regiment as to which would be chosen.

The question was settled by Stephen's being ordered to the front as colonel's orderly.

While so acting, his duties finished about four o'clock; and as he had no sentry duty to perform, he spent his night quietly in bed. But to Stephen the great charm of his new post was that it brought him into continual contact with men of his own social order and education; and who mostly took pleasure in saying a few words to him—out of the usual routine—whenever he came to them at the business of his post.

CHAPTER XVII.

GLORY IN TWO ASPECTS.

MANY weeks have passed since the incidents recorded in the last chapter. It is the afternoon of a day in October, but one of those extraordinary days which October occasionally gives when all the heat as well as all the glory of summer seems to revive. The whole camp is out enjoying the fervent warmth, the fresh air and the delicious sunshine, from which, however, many have sought shelter wherever they can at the shady sides of their dwelling-places for the sake of their games.

The scene near a particular group of

huts, where a larger space than usual happens to be somewhat protected from the direct sun-rays, is extremely animated.

Many soldiers are scattered about; some lying on the ground engaged in card games; others playing at quoits, amid frequent shouts and laughter at the hits or the misses; a few are asleep; and one or two in corners, or wherever they could find a spot a little apart, are reading; and these are the men who will be soon rising to be non-commissioned officers, with possibly even still higher rank in the distant future.

At one part of the scene a sentinel appears and disappears at intervals, on guard of a tent a little way off. Languid is his step, and slow; heavy to-day the weapon he carries, and which he frequently rests upon the ground, to seek rest from that which so oppresses him, but again lifts, to pursue the same weary eternal track. He has one consolation. He will be soon 'off duty,' like those he sees enjoying themselves all around. And so he

paces, and paces, backwards and forwards, resigned to discomfort—obedient to discipline, but hating the petty routine which makes up so much of his daily life.

Through this scene moves occasionally a laughter-moving person and figure—Biddy, a seller of cakes, brandy balls, and soldiers' money bags; and who is suspected of dealing surreptitiously in drops of whisky, in answer to a timely hint.

She wears a decayed pilot's coat over her ample nether garments; a coat patched all over; in winter weather to keep it warm, in summer time to hide its rents and stains. About her neck is a thick comforter, while her head-dress is indescribable—something between a bonnet and a wide-awake—which she makes gay in its dilapidation by a bunch of artificial flowers that she once picked up, and so admired that she cleaves to them evermore.

'Brandy balls, cakes, and soldiers' money bags!' Such is her unvarying cry, but which she adapts to the occasion, and to

her liking or disliking for the man or men she is moving past, by the tones of her voice—now stentorian, now dropping to a lower pitch, but by no means to the soft and low, that 'excellent thing in woman' of which Shakspeare speaks; for Biddy's voice, though expressive, is rougher than the roughest of the soldiers around her.

In passing Tommy Atkins, who is not one of her favourites, she stops to bawl in his ear,—

'Cakes, brandy balls, and soldiers' money bags,' and so produces an explosion from that not very amiable person.

'May the devil take you for kicking up such a row. I've played a wrong card, he's down upon me, and I've lost the trick!'

'If the devil does take me,' retorted Biddy, nothing loth, 'he'll let me go again when I tell him what a fine catch he'll get in you.'

A roar of laughter from the listening soldiers, who know Biddy's ways and the

force of her tongue, sets Biddy off again in triumph.

'Cakes, brandy balls, and soldiers' money bags!'

'Oh, Biddy, darling,' says languishingly another soldier, 'how much longer am I to sigh all day, and dream all night about your beautiful self, and you won't even give me a kiss?'

'Won't I?' says Biddy. 'Just you try me.' And again the laughter is on Biddy's side.

'Cakes, brandy balls, and soldiers' money bags!'

'Boys, it's no use,' now joins in yet a fresh voice, 'you can't touch Biddy's heart. She's keeping all her favours for the young Swell.'

'Shall I write him a love letter for you, Biddy?' calls out Tommy Atkins, recovering from his former failure. Immediate was his punishment:—

'Ye'd best be thinking o' the love letter that will be written some day on your back

with the cat-o'-nine-tails,' shouts Biddy, amid universal mirth; and then repeating once more her cry, which sounded like a triumphant war-whoop, as she looked round, she moved away in search of profitable business elsewhere, 'Cakes, brandy balls, and soldiers' money bags!'

Among the card-players sit a couple of men playing at dominoes, one of the pair being no other than Gentleman Jack; a recent recruit, who, after enlisting into and deserting from half-a-dozen regiments in succession, has found his way here, in his constant search for Stephen, but who does not yet know if he is to be here successful, for Stephen is away on special duty.

The alteration in his appearance is extraordinary. The shabby, bloated, dirty-looking civilian, in his dress suit of a former day, is now a healthy-looking, robust soldier; upon whom the red coat seems to confer quite a new dignity and splendour from the contrast.

Scarcely had the sounds of Biddy's

voice ceased, before Gentleman Jack's was heard, as he placed his last piece, crying,—

'And there's game—domino!'

He rose, stretched himself, and began to pace about, looking at the hands of the soldiers who were card-playing, and getting now and then a rough hint to move on, which he took with a smile, and did as requested.

Suddenly broke out, upon the sultry and still air, the exhilarating sounds of a band in the distance.

'What's the music for?' he asked the nearest soldier, who happened to be Tommy Atkins.

That personage looked as though he thought the recruit had no right to ask him questions, or if he had, that he wasn't obliged to answer, but at last said briefly and sullenly,—

'Riot of last night spreading. More troops ordered out.'

The martial music drew every minute

nearer, and presently the band came in view, with a body of soldiers; whose march seemed to be taught by the music, so grandly did they move in unison; and who were arrayed in all the glittering and gorgeous panoply of war, which the sun wonderfully magnified.

This was the going out. How different might be the coming in was shortly to be illustrated in equally impressive fashion.

'Is the young Swell your comrade spoke of among them?' asked Gentleman Jack, benevolently unmindful of Tommy Atkins' churlish manner.

'No. He's with them as went out late last night, and are getting rough usage, I expect.'

'What's he called?'

'Stephen Shand.'

'C-h-a-n?'

'No. S-h-a-n!'

'Has he been long here?'

'Nearly three months.'

'And long enough,' interjected a friendly

voice, 'to make him a right down smart soldier.'

'And the crack shot of the regiment,' joined in another red-coat.

'I hate the fellow!' shouted Tommy Atkins, as if to stop these testimonials to character on behalf of the Swell.

The soldiers laughed, and one of them did more, by remarking,—

'He threw you in the wrestling!'

'And I'll throw him yet. But I hate the fellow for his humbug, pretending to take pride in roughing it with the roughest, and to like the hardships we all know very well, we have only to grin and bear.'

A murmur of applause for once followed these words of the 'Grumbler,' as Tommy Atkins was called by his comrades.

'But who is he? Where did he come from?' inquired Gentleman Jack.

'Nobody knows,' said Tommy's antagonist at cards.

'Ay, and you may take your davit he

had good reasons why nobody should know!' retorted Tommy.

'I'll bet,' said the previous speaker, 'he never did a hard day's work afore he came here. Why, his hands were as white and delicate as a woman's.'

'I'm sick of the Swell,' said Tommy Atkins, as he threw down the cards in his hand with a gesture, implying he was equally sick of them; and, indeed, he had lost the game. 'Let Jack, the recruit, give us a song to take the taste of the Swell out of our mouths.'

Tommy had again succeeded in pleasing the auditory; there was a general cry of 'Hear, hear, hear.'

But before Gentleman Jack could begin, a soldier came running in hot haste, bathed with sweat, who shouted out,—

'News, boys! The riot is over. There has been a bloody fight—many of our lads badly hurt. A lot of 'em are just here. We must all lend a hand. They are in a hawful plight.'

All the soldiers bounded instantly to their feet, and watched in dead silence the approach of the troops that had been announced, and among whom Gentleman Jack hoped to find Stephen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RIOT.

DURING the last few weeks the Fenian agitation, which had been supposed to have ceased, had been renewed with increased fury.

Rumours of all kinds were flying about as to the nature and extent of the movement. By one set of reporters they were merely held to be local and trifling, and that they only made so much noise because the Fenians took care to give them publicity, with added circumstances of exaggeration that quite falsified their true character, as simply agrarian disturbances.

But others took a darker view, and

thought the Fenian policy very different, and much more subtle and dangerous. They considered the Fenians really originated the seeming riots; desiring to cover a great part of Ireland with similar centres of active disaffection, under the disguise of local affairs; so that, without exciting the suspicions of the Government, they might go on unmolested as insurrectionists, till they were ripe for action, and then strike.

News reached the camp the day before the one in question that a riot of this dubious character had broken out at a place a few miles distant; and a detachment of troops were ordered off under the command of Captain Etheredge, Stephen being in the ranks. The troops started early in the evening, marched the whole night, which was dark, but pleasant, and only as day began came in sight of the place where the riot was said to have broken out. If so, they all thought it must be over, and the rioters abed, for

they saw not a living person, heard not a sound, till on turning a corner they found themselves before a vast crowd of men, mingling with whom were some women.

They had evidently waited the approach of the soldiers in silence, and then at the moment of the appearance of the troops hurled a fearful volley of stones upon them.

Several of the men were knocked down, and the remainder were about to fire, but Captain Etheredge, in advance with lifted hands, forbad, and bade them advance slowly with the bayonet.

'Disperse them, but do no more if you can possibly help it!'

Again came the storm of heavy stones, and the blood of the soldiers was at fever heat, as they levelled bayonets, and advanced.

But the crowd, which greatly out-numbered them, now closed with them, raising wild, unearthly cries. And then for some minutes a hand-to-hand fight took place.

The rioters using all sorts of weapons—clubs, old swords, guns, newly-made pikes, and the women, shrieking and cursing like demons, mingled in the bloody struggle with implements drawn from the domestic hearth.

Stephen got a sharp blow on the cheek, which for a moment confused him, and seemed to fill his eyes with gore.

But the sight of both his immediate superiors, the corporal, and the sergeant, lying senseless on the ground, nerved him to fresh exertion.

Assuming command without waiting a word, or a second, in saying why he did so, he rallied the men about him, and headed them in an attack upon a body of rioters that were near, and a little apart from the chief body, who were engaged with the captain. He struck so effectually that they dispersed on all sides—those at least who were able to get away. Then seeing the position of the captain, he called the notice of the men, who were snatching a

moment to breathe more freely and to dress their wounds, to his danger; and with a few excited and exciting sentences brought them into order, and led them with fresh ardour, and a loud hurrah against the mob of rioters. These, knowing not the number of the new body, began to fall back fighting at each step; till seeing their chance of escape through the fatigue of the soldiery, and the injuries many had received, they followed the example of their companions, and dispersed rapidly by so many ways, seeking cover as they went, that pursuit was practically impossible; taking with them their killed and wounded.

The object of the expedition had been achieved, but at heavy cost, which they were not as yet able to estimate. No one was actually dead, and that was all that could be thought of as comforting.

And now there remained for the troops, including the wounded, some in extreme danger, no resource but to march back to the camp. That march home was by

common consent always afterwards spoken of as the worst part of the whole affair.

Such had been the efforts, and such was the state of the men, who now came back to the camp; but with no music to cheer the men, their pace that of a funeral march, their appearance a striking and fearful contrast to the troops that had gone out but a little time before.

And as that body may be said to have typified in a superficial sense the glory of war, so did these troops suggest all the misery and ruin and degradation that too often lies beyond or beneath the 'glory.'

Almost to a man they were covered with mud, and stains of gore. As to the wounded, the impromptu manner in which alone their hurts could be attended to in their march home, caused heads to be tied up with parti-coloured handkerchiefs, that made the pale faces, and the dried-up gore, all the more hideous and ghastly. Limbs, too, were bandaged with whatever ligature came first to hand.

Such was the spectacle which met the eyes of a deeply-interested observer, Gentleman Jack, whose mental comment was worthy of him,—

'Catch me in that sort of fun if you can!'

But he, like the other men off duty, helped to take the weapons from those of the exhausted soldiery, who still had managed to struggle along with them; and to relieve those who were carrying not only their own arms, but those of comrades too helpless to bear anything but themselves.

Then, too, they had to succour others who could not have marched at all without the aid of comrades only a little less exhausted; and lastly, to set free the litter bearers, for two soldiers, severely wounded, were borne along on a frame-work made by muskets and great coats.

These first steps in the way of relief to all concerned being accomplished, and the whole of the returning men being

arranged, with a slight attempt at formation, the captain addressed them.

'Men,' said he, and then stopped for a moment, as if to seek fresh strength before he could go on. It was no wonder. He had endured a more than common share of the efforts and suffering of the last few hours, ending in that march home, under a sun of such uncommon heat as no man among them remembered before in October; and such as only his spirit and sense of responsibility could have carried him through.

'Men,' he began for the second time, 'the courage and devotion you have shown in quelling this formidable riot, which at times threatened, I fear, to become an insurrection, demand my warm acknowledgments.'

He paused, looked round, as in search of some one, then cried,—

'Stephen Shand!'

'Here, captain,' was the reply; and Stephen stepped out of the ranks, and

moved to the front in obedience to the captain's call and gesture.

Eagerly Gentleman Jack bent forward to see if it was his old 'friend;' but so changed was the man he saw, by his military aspect on the one hand, and the injuries he had just received on the other, that even his old acquaintance scarcely recognised him. The loss of his long hair and moustache, the darkening of his features by exposure to the sun of the last few weeks, the dress at once so showy, so dirty, and so disorderly, the blood spots on his face, and the exhaustion, that made it a severe trial to stand there upright and steady with the aid of his musket as a staff, all these were obstacles to recognition.

'Is that your Swell?' whispered Gentleman Jack to Tommy Atkins; whose ordinarily sullen features became more characteristic as he guessed what was impending, and was too envious and malignant to condescend to reply.

But when Gentleman Jack nudged him, and repeated the question, he did condescend to nod an affirmation.

'Stephen Shand,' said the captain, 'your behaviour must not pass without official recognition. At a critical moment you took the place of your immediate superiors, aided in re-organising many of your comrades under a deadly and exasperating shower of stones from overwhelming numbers, and in dispersing them. You then came to your captain's aid, and subsequently joined in a general charge that swept all before us. Your conduct on the march home has been no less conspicuous. Wounded and worn out, like all the rest, you seem to have thought only of your comrades. Your merits will not be overlooked. Men, you are now dismissed.'

And then he waited their departure to hold a little private conversation with Stephen.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE SWELL.

ALTHOUGH Captain Etheredge dismissed his men to the rest, food, and surgical attendance their respective cases might require, he did not, as has been shown, himself follow when he had watched the departure. The moment he and Stephen were alone, he asked,—

'How about your wound?' noticing, as he spoke, that Stephen waited in the same attitude of respect as before, but without the support of his gun, which Gentleman Jack had relieved him of, inquisitively regarding his features at the same time.

'Oh, that's a trifle, captain,' said Stephen with a smile.

'I suppose you, like me, want rest before anything else?'

'It isn't that, captain,' and again the speaker smiled, 'so much as that every nerve in my body seems to be trying on me a separate and distinctive torture, as if to know which I liked best.'

'Shand, it is no idle compliment to say you cannot have belonged to the class from which the army chiefly draws its recruits.'

'I was, and am, a poor man,' Stephen answered abruptly, and with an air of reserve that closed the kindly captain's mouth.

'Well,' he responded, and evidently taking no offence, 'if I can at any time be of service to you, let me know.'

And with that he withdrew; and Stephen was at liberty to seek such solace as mother earth could afford, when once he could land himself safely on her breast—a

matter of no easy accomplishment in his state; but it was done at last, and blessed indeed was the relief and repose.

After a few minutes he dropped off into sleep; and probably would have remained so for hours, but the soldiers began to straggle in, and become noisy, as one related to another incidents of the riot that had already become known.

So Stephen was awakened, and for a brief time found amusement in listening to the gossip, and in comparing mentally the actual truth, according to his own experience, with the fabulous reports caught up and improved upon by the bystanders.

Among the things said were some that deeply interested him, and threw a new colour on the late struggle.

It appeared from them that the peasantry were under the belief that the military were only the advance guard of the sheriff; with a lot of officers and bailiffs coming to evict them wholesale from their farms.

Facts, too, were mentioned showing how severe had been their sufferings during the last few years, during which the arrears had accumulated, for which the landlord's agents had threatened to turn them all out if the rents were not paid by a certain day. This expired three days before the march of the soldiery.

Lastly, their mistake was attributed to the acts of the Fenians, who wanted to create everywhere bad blood between their countrymen and the English.

Stephen, however, thought that remained to be proved. Considerateness, in view of Stephen's state, on the part of Tommy Atkins, now drew his attention away. Tommy had a can of beer in his hand. This he offered to Stephen, saying,—

'I've fetched this for you from the canteen.'

'I'm greatly obliged,' said Stephen warmly, and he drank with zest, and felt at once greatly refreshed. 'That's worth

a Jew's eye, as they say. But the precise value of that article I never could learn.'

'What do you say to another tussle with me now?' asked Tommy.

'That's a likely game!' roared out a soldier close by.

'And why not?' demanded Tommy. 'He's tired. So am I. Been in a heavy fatigue job. What do you say, Shand?'

'Well, I should have preferred your asking me to-morrow. But if you can wait till I have rested, got something to eat, and had a good wash—'

'And done half a hundred things beside, I suppose! I guessed how it would be. You won by a fluke the other day, and you don't mean to lose by a fair tussle?'

'Help me up,' said Stephen coolly; and with Tommy Atkins' help he got up and faced his challenger.

'Fair play, boys!' called out one of the crowd of red-coats, that speedily gathered in a ring about the pair.

'Ay, ay! we'll see to that,' cried the others.

Tommy Atkins was a bigger man altogether than Stephen, and therefore the more dangerous if he should manage what was said to be an old trick of his—namely, that if he succeeded in throwing his man, to fall upon him also, as if accidentally, and so settle him.

He was also fairly skilful, and well acquainted with all the technical feints and dodges, the advances and retreats, which may be brought into play to catch the antagonist at an unguarded moment, then suddenly close with, and throw him before he has time to resist.

But in this, as in so many other physical exercises, the brain—the head—is of more consequence than the muscle, the brute power, and the deceptive art. So was it now. Stephen was an accomplished oarsman, fencer, runner, and leaper. Athletic exercises had been the media through which in his London life he passed off and

drove away whatever was most dangerous in his enforced idleness and latent discontent.

He found too in them means to satisfy his ambition, his love of power, and his self-solacing belief that he was still good for something.

Tommy Atkins, who had not the sense to see or suspect the vital difference between himself and the Swell, even after his first defeat, was now to be furnished with means for—and to be made to see the necessity of—at once beginning with the study of those differences, if he meant to venture a third trial.

Stephen reflected that if in his present state he gave his antagonist time to prolong the struggle, he would in all probability be himself beaten by the strength, weight, and endurance natural to the other; and which had in no noticeable degree been lessened by his 'fatigue' labour. He determined, therefore, to run any risk but that.

The struggle began. Wary on both sides for a time, though Tommy Atkins kept pressing on, confident if he could once get a firm grip, the business would be soon brought to an end.

The business was settled even sooner than Tommy Atkins hoped and believed. Getting tired of Stephen's Parthian mode of combat, he made a bold feint which Stephen had carefully invited. It failed, and instantly he was himself caught by a feint on Stephen's part. A moment later he was in the air, his feet just lifted from the ground, and then, instead of instantly recovering, as he thought, *terra firma*, he found he had got too much *terra firma*, for he was lying at full length upon it.

And then to cap the unpleasantness of Tommy Atkins' position came the shouts of the soldiery, announcing for the second time the triumph of the Swell.

CHAPTER XX.

ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

STEPHEN generously offered his hand to Tommy Atkins to help him to his feet; but the beaten man, looking as if he could spit upon it if he dared, turned away, rose by the aid of his own hands to his knees, and thus gained an erect posture. Finding himself a good deal shaken, he took the offered arms of two of the soldiers, and went away, followed by most of those present.

And then Stephen once more lay down and disposed himself for sleep, feeling he could neither eat nor drink or do anything else whatever for his comfort or decency

of appearance till he had obtained refreshment from that 'sore labour's bath,' of which Macbeth speaks.

But he was again interrupted. Gentleman Jack, seeing few of the soldiers about, and none very near, came and lay down close by Stephen, and stared him full in the face.

Stephen stared in return at this seemingly impudent stranger recruit, put him out of countenance by his stern imperturbability, lighted his pipe, and took no more notice than if he were quite alone.

'Comrade!' at last says Gentleman Jack.

'Well?' replied Stephen, in a tone somewhat differing from his natural one.

Gentleman Jack's answer was to thrust before his eyes a newspaper, and point with his finger at a particular part.

'Want me to read it for you?' said Stephen, as if supposing the recruit could not read it for himself.

'If you wouldn't mind,' said Gentleman Jack.

The passage pointed at was an advertisement, headed with the words in full capitals,—

ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

Stephen's rapid glance soon took in the nature of the advertisement; but he showed no sign of being at all interested, and began to read aloud in a hard, artificially-sounding voice as follows:—

'ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.—S. C. F. is most earnestly requested to come to or communicate with his aged, possibly dying, mother; who has to make known a matter of the utmost interest and importance to him personally.

'The foregoing having appeared fruitlessly for several weeks, the reward now prefixed will be paid to anyone, who

knowing or guessing the name of the gentleman referred to, and his present abode, will furnish the information required to Messrs Brandon & Cobb, solicitors, Lincoln's Inn. It is supposed he has enlisted.'

'Well?' queried Gentleman Jack, at the close of the reading.

'Well?' responded Stephen, and again he looked at Gentleman Jack so steadily, and apparently so unconscious of any cause why he should not, that the latter's confidence was shaken; and he went away forgetting the newspaper, which Stephen was glad to retain, if only for a second perusal.

'A terrible message,' he thought to himself, 'for one who has no longer the power to respond. I am chained here.'

His face saddened as he thought of his mother's state, her anxiety for his presence, and the possible hope that she meant to hold out something pleasing to him regarding Miss Vandeleur.

But would his mother know of what had passed just before his departure? Or would she only partially know, and therefore fancy a reconciliation was still possible if he would but come? Such thoughts revived vividly his past relations with Miss Vandeleur, and his own sense of dissatisfaction with the severity of his judgment, and the more than severity of the punishment he had inflicted.

He sighed, but again went back to his former saying,—

'I am chained here, and must abide, whatever befall in consequence.'

Seeing Gentleman Jack was coming back, whom he had instantly recognised, while determining not to be recognised in his turn, if he could help it, he hurriedly tore off a piece of the newspaper, from that tore the advertisement, which he slipped into a pocket, and used the rest of the piece to clear away the mud from his clothes and boots.

'I forgot my paper,' said Gentleman Jack, as he again came close to Stephen.

'Paper! What paper?' ejaculated the latter dreamily, as if his thoughts were far away.

'My newspaper!' said Gentleman Jack, carefully ignoring the wreck of it which he saw on the ground.

'Newspaper? Oh yes. There it is!' and Stephen pointed to the mutilated sheet.

Gentleman Jack took it up, and at once cried,—

'Why, it's torn out!'

'What's torn out?'

'The advertisement I got you to read for me.'

There was an exclamation of regret from Stephen, who presently added,—

'Did you want it? I'm sorry. I've been taking the spare mud off me with this piece,' and so saying, he rolled the dirty bit up into a ball, and threw it away.

Gentleman Jack's doubt (if he still had any) about Stephen's identity, and his hesitation, if he had not, as to how he should act, ceased at once; and he was plainly about to challenge Stephen, perhaps by his own name, uttered aloud, but that Stephen understood, and by a gesture of recognition, and a warning glance around at the soldiers, stopped Gentleman Jack; who subsided for a time into silence, and solitary musing apart, watching and secure of his prey, which he had run to earth at last, without a possibility of escape.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW GENTLEMAN JACK LOVES WORK.

WHEN a few minutes had passed, Stephen's 'friend' got tired of waiting, and suggested to the nearest soldier a game of quoits, saying if he would collect players and begin, he would join in a few minutes.

The bait took speedily; the coast was clear. And then Gentleman Jack, advancing with an air that seemed to say he knew how glad Stephen would be of the opportunity, said to him with a laugh,—

'We are alone at last.'

'It seems you won't let me be alone,' retorted Stephen.

'What an unkind remark to one who has paid flying visits to some half-dozen regiments in search of you, and found you at last—a private soldier!'

'I advised you in London to turn over a new leaf, and I chose to follow my own prescription.'

'And how do you like it!' queried Gentleman Jack.

'That depends on how it will answer its purpose. And you, Jack?'

'I've only as yet got a few glimpses into the vocation; and I mean in double-quick time to get out of it. Officers and men are all rank Philistines.'

'Then hadn't you better stay?' asked Stephen, 'and be the Samson to smite them.'

'What! with the same glorious weapon —the jawbone of an ass?' said Gentleman Jack. And Stephen could not resist a hearty laugh.

Presently, however, he took occasion to say,—

'Now, Jack, I can't at present help you, and you can do nothing for me, except to keep aloof from me, and from my affairs in all respects.'

'I am not a leech, wanting to stick,' was the answer. To which Stephen responded by a significant—

'Hem!'

'And if I am, ain't leeches good things?'

'Occasionally, Jack; occasionally. Let me tell you I have lately been studying a character.'

'Not mine, I should hope. I hate such ways.'

'Judge for yourself from its traits. A gentleman born, yet with so little pride as to live upon people poorer than himself.'

'That's savage!'

'Gifted with talent, yet content to use his talent only to adorn, if such a thing is possible, one of the most contemptible of lives.'

'That's downright wicked,' remonstrated Gentleman Jack with imperturbable good

humour. 'But stop! I've an idea. I'm going to sketch your face.' And he pretended to be drawing on the back of a letter. 'Now, mind, please; the mouth quite shut.'

Stephen did manage to resist a laugh, and continue his critical analysis:—

'Strong, healthy, having taste and talent fit for anything, and everything, yet refusing to pay the little price that all these things demand for ensuring a manly and useful life!'

The victim began to wince; so tried a diversion in a new line by putting his fingers into his ears, and saying with a smile as he did so,—

'Did you speak? I can't hear a word!'

Stephen lowered his tone, instead of raising it, as he continued,—

'Shall I tell you what is the price? Work, Jack, work! To you the most hateful of things.'

'Work!' was the prompt rejoinder. 'Why, that's the one thing I do like! I

love it! And, therefore, do all I can to enhance its attraction and value, by believing, with the poet, 'tis distance lends enchantment to the view!'

Stephen could no longer resist the testimony of inextinguishable laughter.

'Ah, Jack,' he said, when he could speak, 'if smart sayings were smart doings, what a fine fellow you'd be!'

'Pelt me with sarcasms—I shall bear all. What's the friend worth for whom you can't make a sacrifice?'

'Say, Jack, what's the friend worth *of* whom you can't make sacrifices?'

'Go on! Hit me again! I'm down, and have no friends!'

'Yes, Jack, one true friend, if only you will let him respect himself, by being able to respect you.'

'A bargain! Let us strike it at once. Lend me a shilling, and I will take the first step to reform by paying my debts.'

'At the canteen? And then run a new score? Eh?' Gentleman Jack only

laughed at this; and Stephen added, 'As I haven't got a shilling for myself, there's a slight difficulty in finding one for you.'

'I am a loyal subject,' was the ready response, 'and when I can't get the Queen's portrait in silver, I am not too proud to adore her in copper.'

'Cakes, brandy balls, and soldiers' money bags!' cried Biddy, as she again approached.

'Here! Biddy,' called Stephen.

'I'm coming, bless your bonny face!'

'What, Biddy! with blood and mire crusting it all over? Take my handkerchief, dip it in clean water, and perhaps with that aid I may be able once more to see *your* bonny face, which I hardly can just now.'

Biddy dipped the handkerchief, and Stephen used it so effectively as to feel and look wonderfully better and more comfortable. Biddy watched admiringly the whole operation, and when it was over said,—

'And what now do you want?'

She set down her basket before him, and displayed her treasures to the best advantage for his choice.

'To begin with,' said Stephen, 'I don't want you to make love to me in public. In private's another matter.'

Biddy's coarse face so brightened all over with enjoyment of Stephen's fun, even though she knew well enough it was at her own expense, that it became almost comely.

'Next,' Stephen continued, 'I am famishing, so must have a lot of these cakes.' Having supplied himself, he said, 'Here's sixpence, give the change to my comrade, Jack.'

Biddy didn't quite approve of that idea, so she came close and whispered,—

'I have a drop of whisky at the bottom of the basket, and the sixpence shall pay for all.'

'No, thanks!' said Stephen. 'Now be off, or I must really call the guard to protect me.'

Biddy gave Gentleman Jack the change, gave a passing look and smile to Stephen, and then went her way to the old tune,—

'Cakes, brandy balls, and soldiers' money bags!'

Seeing Gentleman Jack looking rather oddly at the coppers on the palm of his hand, Stephen asked,—

'Wrong change?'

'No. I was thinking to myself, I do make many mistakes, but never in trusting to the unfailing goodness and bounty of my friend!' And away he was going with that expression of gratitude for future favours, but was stopped by Stephen's peremptory and admonitory,—

'Jack!'

Wondering what was the matter, Gentleman Jack returned.

'Sit down, please, for one minute. I want to ask you two questions—one in your own interest and welfare, the other in mine.'

'All right. Now for No. 1.'

'You said you had been visiting sundry camps in search of me. How did you manage that, without enlisting?'

'I think, in my interest, we had better pass to the second question.'

'Then it is as I feared—you are a deserter.'

'If I were, you might speak lower in such a place as this.' And Gentleman Jack's face visibly paled as he looked round to see if any one was in earshot.

'Well now, Jack, I don't want to commit you to any inconvenient acknowledgments, but I have a few words to say to you of a more serious character than I have ever said to you before. Now to my second question. Have you in your search been asking for me by my name?'

'Certainly not,' responded Gentleman Jack with natural earnestness. 'It was because I would not do that—that I lingered here and there *a little too long* for my own comfort, so that I might use my

eyes and ears alone in finding out what I wanted to know.'

'That is well so far as I am concerned, and at present I concern myself mainly with that. I do not ask if you have yet made any use of the advertisement you exhibited to me—'

'I couldn't for two reasons. You destroyed it, and I have only to-day known you were here,' interrupted Gentleman Jack; who was evidently growing uncomfortable under the increasing sternness of Stephen's face and tone.

'So I concluded,' continued Stephen. 'Well, this is what I want to say, and my past experience of you teaches that I must speak just as strongly as I feel, and as I intend to act. Mark now my words. If any intimation be sent to my home, I know now from whom it must come. And the same hour that brings the fact home, I shall go to my captain, tell him who and what you are, and why you are trying to drive me from the regiment.

Then by the next post I shall declare to my friends my fixed purpose to stay here and work for a commission before I return; and tell them that I warned you beforehand I would not in any way sanction the payment of the proposed reward, if claimed under such circumstances.'

Gentleman Jack listened in silence, and with increasing gloom of countenance; and for nearly a minute afterwards could not, marvellous as it may seem, find anything to say that even he himself could have confidence in.

The fact is, he had shaped out a pretty scheme. Send the news of Stephen's whereabouts to the countess by that night's post, claim the reward, buy his discharge, and once more with a full pocket roam about the world just as his fancy dictated.

He saw his scheme overthrown, and he bound to a life that was odious to him, and in which he never felt safe.

After, for him, an unusual delay, which

Stephen was glad of, as showing that he was aware that this was no light matter to be jested away, he said with some constraint of manner,—

'You might have asked me whether I had any such thoughts in my mind before threatening me if I carried it out.'

'I must be my own judge of that,' said Stephen.

'Did you not promise to help me?'

'I did, when I could. I will still do so if you behave yourself. You are here. Make yourself a soldier—which will also make you a better man—and when that is accomplished I may have power even here to help you. Till then I wish to be left alone. I do not want to be thought or spoken of as anybody's friend; and if you do not heed me I shall have to say something that will at all events make it of little consequence what you say, or how you talk. Therefore, be advised. Keep yourself to yourself, and we may yet be

friends hereafter, if I find you have been silent as to my true name and family.'

All the glow, audacity, and bounce that at times looked like courage, seemed to be washed out of Gentleman Jack's soul by the stern warnings of Stephen; which swept over him like an unexpected stream of ice-cold water, chilling him to the heart, or whatever organ stood for that place in his anatomy.

He rose in sullen silence. And Stephen rose too, to add a few words that might mitigate the pain without impairing the force of what he had seen it vitally necessary to say.

'And now, Jack, since you see at last the true state of the case between us, I have only further to tell you that if you do obey my injunction, and keep absolute silence about me, my family, and my residence here, it will, in all probability be only necessary for a few months, or perhaps a year or so at the outside. And

then you shall be the first to inform my mother, and get the reward.'

'Ay, but suppose they find out where you are without my help?' said Gentleman Jack, with a wonderfully sudden recovery of his spirits.

'Then it shall be my task to tell the countess you might have earned it, but lost the chance to please me.'

'And will it please you if I do now determinedly lose it?'

'Yes.'

'Then I'm your man; I will do it, and be happy, because it pleases you.'

This was a great relief to Stephen. He saw what a disreputable companion Gentleman Jack must be for a man like himself, in such a place, aiming high, and unable to explain the circumstances in which the acquaintance originated. But what he had been most anxious about was the assured certainty in his own mind that Gentleman Jack would not lose an hour in bringing down his friends upon him, for the sake

of bringing down a shower of gold upon himself.

Well, he had settled both questions, he thought, satisfactorily; and would again be able to breathe and work in freedom.

One consequence, perhaps, to Gentleman Jack of this very disagreeable conversation was his getting drunk that night; which he managed to conceal sufficiently from the authorities, but which so affected him next day that he twice missed drill, and was put under arrest.

Happening to pass some recruits who were drilling, Stephen, while yet at a distance, saw a soldier enduring the punishment of 'Pack Drill;' one that, like many other punishments, falls lightly on robust men in perfect health and strength, but with cruel severity on those who are naturally or temporarily weak. A man under 'Pack Drill' carries forty rounds of ammunition, his thick great coat, his kit, *i.e.*, knapsack, with shirt, socks, comb, blacking brushes, pipeclay brush, button

cleaner, knife, fork, and spoon, his tin pannikin used for food and for all sort of other purposes, towel, razor, forage cap, heavy boots ; and then to add to the burden of the body for the chance of lightening the spirit—the Bible, understood to be the Queen's present.

Yet that was the burden under which Stephen saw this unfortunate soldier in a warm day going through all the prolonged business of the drill, in attitudes that made the effect of the burden fearfully severe.

As he approached nearer he saw it was Gentleman Jack.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FLYING COLUMN STOPPED IN ITS FLIGHT.

BUT matters of deeper concern were now to engage Stephen's thoughts. He was made lance-corporal, which step was followed in an unusually short time by promotion to full corporal.

And then without anything specially important being said, he had reason to believe that both these steps were only looked upon by Captain Etheredge as leading to his speedy selection to be a sergeant; and so perhaps to that something more, which the captain knew to be in Stephen's thought:—the mark of his

ambition. The only time *that* subject had ever been touched upon between them was when a curious little bit of pleasant diplomatic fencing had taken place.

Captain Etheredge had taken occasion, when the name of a certain sergeant was mentioned in some military business after he had left the regiment, to express his regret at his fate; saying, as if casually, he had tried to get a commission, but failed through, as the captain believed, the opinion of the authorities, he could not be fit for the position, as he had no private property.

With equal apparent disconnection from anything in which the two men, captain and corporal, were concerned, Stephen remarked,—

If such good fortune were ever to fall to him, he had friends who could settle that for him; but immediately turned to the business in hand, and clearly wished nothing more to be said on either side.

It is one of the unsatisfactory aspects of military life that, as all special chances of promotion depend on war, military men must be placed between conflicting interests and duties; those of the patriot, who thinks first of peace, and only of war when he sees it is inevitable; and those of the professional soldiers, whose first thought can hardly help being of themselves, and how war might affect them.

If, in fact, they are to have what men of other professions have — ambition — they must have opportunity, and that is only to be obtained through war.

And although civil war does not with soldiers of heart and principle come into the category of the war they accept with welcome, there generally does come another and still stronger effect into the play — the passion of partisanship; the fanaticism of opinion when the sword is appealed to as arbiter, and opinion can only find vent in that way.

Such was Stephen's state of mind as the

Fenian movement of his period progressed; till at last there were rumours constantly reaching the camp to the effect that the Fenians were actually bold enough to be planning an attack on the camp itself.

The colonel met those threats or fears in a characteristic fashion. He ordered out a flying column to go in search of these terrible Fenians.

Stephen was delighted to find he, as one of Captain, now Major, Etheredge's company, was to be a sharer in the expedition.

The time was near Christmas. The winter an exceptionally severe one. The snow a foot deep on the level ground, when they started at midnight.

To add to all the other amenities of the occasion, a furious and bitter wind was raging over the Curragh, that seemed to penetrate to the very marrow of the men, as they stumbled rather than marched along through the pitchy darkness of the night; now over unseen hillocks, now

down into unsuspected hollows, as they crossed the Curragh; which is always open to the four winds of heaven, and seems to succeed not seldom in bringing them all together here as a fitting place for a grand fight.

The troops had only to march about a mile and a-half to the railway station, where trains were waiting. But the job seemed interminable. No lights could be kept in that there was any attempt to use. And when at last they did arrive at the station, they found only one lamp that could resist the fury of the storm.

In almost total darkness, therefore, had the infantry to get themselves and their weapons safely into the carriages; with many narrow escapes in the confusion that prevailed, when orders could not be heard, and officers could not be recognised.

But their difficulties were child's-play to those which beset the cavalry, who had arrived from Newbridge. They had to force the frightened horses up into the

carriages, to arrange them there so as to accommodate the number allotted to each, and then to creep in safety, when the work was so far done, from the kickings and plungings and swayings about of the terrified animals.

But men and officers were equal to their task, and at last all was ready for the start.

A pilot engine was in front, then the infantry train, and then the train with the cavalry.

This pilot engine was to discover in advance if the rails had been torn up, and so guard the following trains from the destruction that might await them, if they were driven off the track and precipitated down some embankment, or into a river; such places being especially chosen by the Fenians with a view to such results.

Or their idea might be to stop the train at a point where they would be lying in ambush, and pour in upon the doomed troops, cooped up in the carriages,

— or hurriedly issuing from them, a murderous fire, before there would be time or opportunity to make effective reply.

All this was well understood by the soldiery. And though a few old stagers slept—remarking if they didn't sleep then, there was no knowing when they would—the bulk of the men were watchful, meditative, and listening between every pause of the violence of the wind, for the whistle from the pilot engine, that was to be the signal of danger.

For some hours all went well. But just as the men were determining among themselves that there would be a great laugh at their expense, when they got back without finding the Fenians, and had to give as a reason—there were no Fenians to find ;—they heard the warning whistle, shrill, clear, and repeated instantly.

The foremost train, the one in which Stephen was, and in the very first carriage, was instantly stopped in the smallest

possible time, but even then barely escaped a catastrophe, as the rail had been taken up.

As to the pilot engine, it would in a moment have gone not only to destruction itself, but have been followed by both trains behind—and to a fearful catastrophe. But the driver, regardless of all consequences to himself and his companion, the stoker, reversed instantly the action of the engine, threw it on to the ground at the side, and gave the signal that was salvation to the small army behind, of two or three hundred men; but at a heavy cost to himself. Both his legs were broken; and the stoker was also seriously injured.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FLYING COLUMN AGAIN ON THE WING.

THE rails were soon replaced, though it was no easy operation under the extreme severity of the weather, and the depth of snow on the ground, which removed one hour, would again cover the ground in the next, as it drifted before the wind.

The order was given to go on slowly, lest there might be fresh places prepared for the injury of the trains. But nothing more occurred till they reached Limerick Junction.

In any other part of the world than Ireland, that name would naturally mean

a place close to Limerick; and where, therefore, the weary, cold, and half-starved troops would be at once surrounded with the comforts of civilisation.

As it happens, Limerick Junction is just twenty-two miles from Limerick. But, as if to add to the charming inconvenience of everything relating to it, instead of the distance from the city being a reason why there should be special accommodation provided, it seems to have been thought that common sense demanded exactly the reverse.

A more desolate place in reality, at the time of our narrative, there could scarcely be found in the three kingdoms. One or two houses constituted the place, in addition to what was dignified as the station.

Arriving at this oasis in the desert of snow in the morning, all got out, anxious to stretch their limbs, and covetous of food.

What they got was a cup of coffee,

each costing sixpence, which the major took the risk of paying for from his own funds. This having been at first made in the largest vessel at the command of the purveyor, was then, perhaps, fairly good. But when, as fast as coffee was drawn out, hot water was poured in, the character of the beverage rapidly deteriorated, and what it became for the last men, at the end, may be readily divined.

Stephen being in the front carriage was able to get his coffee good; and then, feeling satisfied himself, could jest good-humouredly with those who followed on their ill-luck.

Whatever the poverty of the place, it was, at all events, better than no place at all. So they stayed there a couple of days, waiting for fresh supplies from the camp, picketing their horses as they best could, amid the slough of mud and snow.

When the expected supplies did come

on a special train sent after them, it was found to contain nothing but biscuits for the troops, with oats and hay for the horses.

The distribution was as primitive as the food. The soldiers went to the train and held out their helmets, or other head gear, as receptacles. Into these they received a handful of biscuits each—a ration of 'six upon fours,' as the men call it, meaning that the proper quantity for four men was portioned out among six.

But there was a hurried call to arms, and to marching order. Scouts had come in with the news they had discovered the Fenians in a large body, drilling in a hollow below the mountain, or high hill, which was in sight, though some miles distant.

'Did they see you?' asked Major Etheredge, of the scouts.

Both the men were sure they had not. As they were approaching the Fenians, they had heard words of com-

mand given, and were warned, so they only just allowed themselves to reach the edge, crawling on the grass till they could look over, and then immediately withdrew.

The cavalry went on in advance to try to find a way round, while the infantry were to mount the hill directly in their front.

But when the latter arrived after a most rapid march, they found the cavalry waiting them. They had found no way round that could be of use in enabling them to get secretly behind the Fenians. So all began the ascent together.

Seldom has a more difficult job been imposed upon troops. The foot soldiers went straight for the top, but were perpetually falling in the snow, and on the bare icy slopes, where the snow had been driven off by the wind.

As to the troopers, direct ascent being impossible, they went for their mark in a series of zigzags, horses slipping and

rolling down every few yards, many of their riders dismounted, and then having to lead the animals they could not ride.

Strict orders for silence had been given and obeyed, so far as silence could be practicable under such circumstances. So the major was in hope they would reach the top undiscovered, unsuspected, till they should be ready to plunge down upon the busy mass of men.

A mist greatly aided the attempt at surprise. It seemed indeed probable it would make a veil for them during the last eventful moments, when, having reached the top, they were getting their ranks in order, and advancing step by step within range of vision.

When all were ready on the crown of the hill, and most of the men breathless with their exertions, the major gave them two or three minutes, and then in a low stern voice said, his words being repeated from rank to rank by the non-commissioned officers, Stephen among them,—

'Stop for nothing! Down upon them! March!'

Over the edge they went, down the slopes they plunged, scarcely able to see anything but the dusky forms in the hollow, when suddenly burst upon them a tremendous volley, which laid many of the soldiery low.

But on they went, horse and foot. The descent was more dangerous than the ascent, and caused loss of time and division of the ranks.

When they reached the bottom they could see nothing but the fast vanishing forms of the fugitives who, having waited to give them one deadly salute, had instantly taken to flight; aided by trees, deep water courses, and low spurs of the mountain, which stopped all possibility of effective pursuit.

Many bullets followed the Fenians, and some were seen to fall, and to be snatched up, and borne away by their comrades.

But that was the only solace afforded

to Major Etheredge and his gallant troops in his bitter disappointment, for he had thought to capture the greater part of the body; a feat that would have told wonderfully all through Ireland at so critical a time.

However, there was nothing to be done but to bury their dead, three in number, besides two horses which had to be shot, and which were left to the tender mercies of the wild birds and the winter winds.

Having temporarily dressed the wounds of the five soldiers who had been hit, but none very dangerously, they bore them away with as much care as was practicable; and then sadly began their march along the lower lands to find some town or village where they could rest and get food, for which they were now in imminent need.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SCOUTS' FATE.

PRESENTLY another incident added to the tragical events of the day.

The two men who had acted as scouts, and who had been recommended as loyal peasants of the neighbourhood to Major Etheredge, accompanied the troops on the march for a short distance; but presently announced their intention to return to their homes, by crossing the mountain, and demanded their pay.

The captain was about to satisfy their demand, having seen no reason to doubt their good faith; but finding they wanted more than he had given authority to pro-

mise, he paused in the rear of the troops to discuss the matter, wishing to satisfy them, but unwilling to submit to any kind of extortion.

The troops were at this moment moving round a dense plantation, that promised them speedily a sight of the village or the mansion to which it belonged; and they moved all the more rapidly when they did see a noble castle not far off, with many low erections round where they were likely to find all that they most needed.

It thus happened that the whole of the troops, excepting the rear guard, had passed out of view of the major; and even the rear guard, who waited, seeing their captain pause, were at some distance when the incidents we have to speak of occurred, and which were closely watched by one of their number, Stephen, who simply as a matter of precaution, but in no belief as to its necessity, said to his men,—

'Cover those fellows with your pieces! It's all right I daresay.'

Presently he saw the captain make what seemed a final gesture of refusal, and turn away to rejoin the troops. Then the scouts also moved as if to go back, but instead of going up the hill they turned towards a watercourse, lying deep below its banks, and lined with scrub.

They had not got half-a-dozen yards away before Stephen saw them face round, revolver in hand, and fire at the captain.

But Stephen had been equally prompt, and the moment after their fire was delivered, it was answered by a volley, which caused one of the men almost to leap into the air, and then fall stiff on the sward.

When the smoke passed off, and Stephen and a couple of soldiers reached the spot in a run, they saw one man disappear into the watercourse, the other lying dead.

The captain was happily safe, and deeply moved, as he saw that in all probability he owed his life to his favourite young soldier; whose presence of mind, and vigour, had not only foiled the treacherous rogues who had led the soldiers where they knew the Fenians were waiting to attack them, but

had also prevented the completion of their villainy in the murder of the commander. The revolver of the dead man was found with five shots ready to follow the one that alone he had been able to fire, before his career was summarily ended.

CHAPTER XXV.

STEPHEN'S NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

AS the troops approached the castle they could not but notice how its size and architectural magnificence seemed to contrast with the air of desolation all around.

Not one single person could they find in any of the outbuildings first reached. The lofty stables were empty; and it was not till they came to the entrance gateway, with its heraldic monsters high above, on piers at each side, that they saw any signs of life.

Then faces began to appear at the windows, but only to hurry away as they beheld the troops.

The bell was pulled with a rude vigour

that would have commanded attention had that been necessary. But it was not. The inmates were all the while hastening as friends to the courtyard, and presently the gates were unclosed, and the Comte de —— and his wife the comtesse, appeared standing on the threshold of the hall-door, with a few timid-looking servants behind them, waiting the visitors' approach.

The comtesse, an Irishwoman, having first apologised for the comte's indifferent English, and his desire she should speak for him, proceeded in warm, almost impassioned language, to welcome Major Etheredge and his followers. Then, inviting the former and the officers into the hall, she there again spoke with emotion of the great relief their coming was to them, adding in calmer language an explanation.

The peasantry had turned against them, through quarrels with their agent about payment of rent; had driven their horses and many of their servants away; and had not only refused to bring food or other necessaries, but had actually threatened the servants of their tradesmen, so that for some days they had been in all but actual want.

To complete their troubles, a band of men, supposed to be Fenians, had come only two days ago, forced their way into the castle, and though they were respectful in manner, had taken away all the arms and provisions in store they could find.

In sympathetic response, Major Etheredge told briefly his recent experience, which, no doubt, was with the same body of men who had made this inroad on the castle.

What was to be done with so little food in the place, and so many half-starved, chilled, and wounded men waiting and hoping for meat, drink, and shelter?

The comte and comtesse took counsel together, and at the end the latter said, with a sad but sweet smile, to the major,—

'I think we can manage for yourself and a score of others some bread and cheese, and what you please to drink or smoke, here in the hall. As to those outside, whom we cannot better entertain, they shall have a little whisky and tobacco for each man. It is humiliating to confess it, but this is all we can do for these brave men, for it is all we have for ourselves.'

Of course the major was touched and grateful.

'You can use the stables,' she continued, 'to put your horses and men in—these, and the outhouses are all at your service. Perhaps the day may come when this unhappy country, my own dear Ireland, shall be at rest, and then we should covet the opportunity to treat you all in a manner more worthy of you and ourselves.'

And so matters were arranged. The major and other officers, the non-commissioned officers, and the wounded men were entertained in the hall; the rest had to shift as they could in the places designated, where they soon made themselves comfortable, many of them affirming that tobacco and whisky were not after all such bad meat and drink, when nothing else was to be got.

The hall was very large, and contained some fine suits of armour, which caused Stephen to amuse himself with a comparison between the warriors of the day represented by this armour, and the warriors who were now face to face with them, but thinking only how cold it was, and won-

dering how long the bread and cheese would be in coming.

The domestics lighted great fires in the magnificent fireplaces, and brought chairs and seats of all kinds, some of which the soldiers used to dry their damp clothing.

The comtesse arranged for the major and the officers to be seated at a table apart, where she and her husband waited upon them, with all the stately and graceful courtesy of the land in which she had married, and spent a great part of her life —France.

The pleasant and hospitable things she said, were made more sweet by the accent —surely one the most charming to be found in the whole world, when issuing from the lips of a refined lady, a sweet-voiced and comely woman—and all these were combined in the hostess.

Then she left them to the care of her husband, who managed to keep up a broken sort of conversation, while she addressed herself to see if the wounded wanted anything that was possible to give them under present circumstances. They were all, however, glad to leave things

alone till they should get where proper help could be rendered, being in the meantime not badly doctored by a couple of old sergeants, who had gained a little reputation in that way, and rather liked to be called on.

While these things were in progress, Stephen, who was busily drying his clothes by one of the half-lit fires, noticed among the attendants a grey-haired, keen-visaged man, bustling about with a bundle of faggots for the fires.

Something in his face and air suggested to Stephen he was not an ordinary servant; and then from his dress and bearing he judged him to be an old soldier, who had turned gardener or something of that sort, possibly with his former master.

Still the man was of no particular interest to him; and it was only from the fact that the scene gave the smallest incident a value and importance, that his eyes followed him in preference to any of the other figures moving about, when once the comtesse had withdrawn to send in the promised food.

The person in question came up to the

fire where Stephen was—looked at him, and then gave a second and peculiarly scrutinising look before putting his wood in the fire, stooping on his knees to make a blowpipe with his hands, and then gradually kindling the fresh wood, which began to blaze and brighten all around and near.

'That's nice!' remarked Stephen to him, as he drew closer, holding out his palms to enjoy the cosy warmth. 'It makes one forget the outside we came from, and must soon go back to!'

'Like a bit of tobacco, young fellow, while the grub comes?' asked the man, with a humorous smile, as if conscious of a soldier's weak points.

'Well, old fellow, I really think I should,' answered Stephen, with a laugh, as the supposed gardener took out a goodly roll, and handed it to Stephen.

'There, smoke away! The comtesse won't mind. The others 'll all be at it as soon as they have settled their stomachs with something more substantial.'

The attendant now came in with the bread and cheese and the whisky; both

in sufficient supply, while something extra had been managed for the officers' table, which they ate with great relish.

'Shall I fetch you something to go on with?' asked Stephen's new acquaintance, 'and so save time in waiting for your turn?'

'Well, upon my word, you are the finest old fellow I ever did meet with—under such circumstances—and I don't mind confessing I am horribly hungry.'

'I thought so. You look so.' Off he went to the far end of the hall, where the bread and cheese was being put up into rations, and the whisky poured out into tumblers, so that water might be put to it or not as the drinkers pleased.

Taking one of the rations, a tumbler with whisky, and a bottle of water, he came back, gave them to Stephen, and squatted down on the hearth in the absence of a convenient chair, and seemed to take pleasure in watching Stephen's enjoyment of the food.'

'A corporal, I see,' was his next remark during a pause between the eating and drinking. 'Expecting to be sergeant?'

'Of course; then sergeant-major, then quartermaster, then a commission as ensign, and then right slick away, as the Americans remark, to be a general, and so to the top of the tree, as commander-in-chief. If I make any mistake as to the sequence of the steps in advance, doubtless you can set me right. The quartermaster step, for instance, does, I believe, precede the general step, and certainly the final resting place as commander-in-chief?'

Was Stephen amusing himself with satirising the curiosity of his entertainer, or simply indulging himself with a bit of fun which might draw the latter out?

That question might almost have been read in the face of the 'old fellow' as he again closely scrutinised the face of the 'young fellow.' But the only comment he made was that, as far as he knew, the quartermaster step did precede that to the generalship.

But the tone was so like Stephen's own, one so compounded of latent humour, and a pretence of simple ignorance and ingenuous desire to learn, that Stephen began to suspect he was making an ass of

himself, in the presence of one quite capable of seeing that truth.

He looked at the old fellow for a moment with feigned seriousness, as if to convince him he had meant all he said; but presently bursting out into loud laughter as he added,—

'Old fellow, I'm no such fool. I mind what Shakespeare says about vaulting ambition o'erleaping itsel', that means its saddle, you know, or don't know, and so I shall be content to take the good the gods provide.'

'Are you a gentleman?'

'As a soldier I should be sorry to be thought otherwise.'

'Are you a gentleman?' again asked the old fellow.

'Are you?' demanded Stephen, thinking simply to throw back a question that it was inconvenient to answer; and which might be so replied to as to help him to put an end to the query.

'Well, I'm somewhat of your faith. I'm but a sort of helper here at present, but I don't know that that should prevent me from playing the gentleman.'

'Exactly my case, so let's say no more about it. Humble fellows as we are, we'll both stand up for the right to be esteemed gentlemen if insolently challenged.'

The old fellow's eyes sparkled as he heard this, but he made no remark on it.

'Would you like to stretch your legs for a bit?

'Very much, in your society.'

'Come then.'

They went out into the courtyard, crossed it, and stopped at the only door that had not been opened to the soldiers. This the old fellow unlocked, and they entered.

Stephen could not guess for what the place had been destined. It was empty, dirty, and strewed with broken bottles, broken boxes, empty cans, torn paper covers, and a heterogeneous mass of rubbish.

Seeing his wonder, the old fellow said to him,—

'This is where we kept a large supply of stores for the winter, which the Fenians broke up and cleared out for us; but they

too, played the gentleman, and robbed us with admirable grace. Follow me!'

He opened a door, and they ascended a staircase to an upper storey, where the long room was filled with bins and cases; the former for wines and liquors, the latter for tobacco and cigars of all kinds, as he at once explained to Stephen.

'All empty now?' said Stephen.

'All nearly full!' was the reply.

'What! the Fenians left all this?'

'Ay, d—n them, they were much too clever to be caught that way. I left the door below open especially for their accommodation. But when I had occasion to come in, for they ordered me about in right royal style, and it suited my humour to obey fresh masters for the time, I found a couple of men standing just where you and I are now standing, with revolvers in their hands, prepared to shoot down any of their own kidney who should venture up in hope of a grand haul.'

'Really!' ejaculated Stephen, at this new trait of the enemy.

'Well, now, you shall have what you like.'

'I say, old fellow, you must have a pretty good place here, to be trusted with the key of these treasures, and be entitled to offer them to a new-comer like me.'

'Oh, the place is well enough. It suits me. But what will you have?'

'Thank you. I want nothing here, unless you think it will be no robbery to give another roll of your master's tobacco; for a corporal's pay doesn't, I find, teem with indulgences.'

'But wouldn't you like to taste. I expected a young fellow like you would have been too glad to run riot a bit.'

'Then you, as an old fellow, ought to be ashamed to say so; or, at least, ought to be ashamed to tempt me, a young fellow, if that was really your object, which, after all, I begin to doubt.'

These last words were due to a strangely significant smile in the 'old fellow's' face, who did not in the least appear offended by the reproof, but rather dwelt on it with enjoyment.

'We'll go back now,' he said.

And they returned to the hall, where, as Stephen went one way to regain his place,

he found his companion had taken the other, to meet a soldier-servant who was advancing towards him.

There was an odd mixture of respect and awkward familiarity, Stephen thought, in this man's behaviour to the old fellow; which suggested for the first time the possibility of some awkward mistake as to the vocation and social rank of his acquaintance, who, after speaking to the soldier, left the hall.

Getting near to the soldier, Stephen said,—

'May I ask who that is you have just been talking to?'

'Who! Why, don't you know?'

'No.'

'Has he been talking to you?'

'Yes, and so familiarly, that when he called me young fellow, I was not at all offended, but saluted him as "old fellow" in return. I hope I haven't made a mess of it!'

'Oh, he likes that sort of thing when it comes fresh and genuine.'

'But who is he?'

'A retired colonel of the Life Guards,' said the man, mentioning a well-known and

highly esteemed officer, on the staff of the commander-in-chief, and believed to be one of his special favourites.

Stephen could only express his feelings in a prolonged whistle; followed by a succession of short laughs and broken ejaculations, which greatly amused the colonel's servant; and who proceeded to reassure Stephen by saying,—

'Keep it up if he speaks to you again while here, but mind never remember it afterwards. He is not simply here as the brother of the comtesse, but on possible business that makes him wish to be unknown—or if known unrecognised.'

'Thanks, I understand. As to keeping it up that's all very fine, but—'

Here the soldier saw his master re-entering, and made a hurried movement to avoid being seen with Stephen.

The 'old fellow' approached Stephen with the same mien and familiar manner as before, to say to him,—

'Do you know where you are going when you leave here—presently?'

'No,' answered Stephen, trying to 'keep it up' by tone and manner, but unable to

control a growing sentiment of respect and deference which he felt, and which told the colonel's quick eye—he was known. He spoke, however, and behaved exactly as before, and Stephen's instinct warned him to follow his guidance.

'Well, the comtesse has a friend a few miles off, the owner of some fine estates in this country as well as in England. Did you ever hear of the Earl of Harlaxton?'

'Yes,' said Stephen, after seemingly thoughtful deliberation.

'Well, the earl has come here with his mother and a young relative, to spend his Christmas among the tenantry; and finds himself very much in the same straits as ourselves, with the exception that his robbing has yet to be done. And he doesn't at all incline to the idea of letting it be done.'

'I don't wonder at that,' said Stephen, with a faint smile, but scarcely trusting himself to speak, so great was the emotion the news had excited.

'He has sent for soldiers; but sending for them at this time doesn't exactly mean as a consequence their coming. So the

comtesse has spoken to the major, who has accepted the mission to go there; for, as he sagely remarked, if Fenians were expected he should be delighted to have the duty of properly welcoming them.'

Not one casual look, not one doubtful tone, or a single peculiarity of expression on the colonel's face, intimated to Stephen that he also was known to the colonel, as the colonel was known to him.

Yet if the subject, and its being so directed at him was accidental, and a mere recurrence to the familiar confidences that had marked their brief intimacy, what an extraordinary accident! He was confounded, knew not what to believe, and still less was able to find anything appropriate to say.

He was soon relieved on the latter score. The 'old fellow' did not wait for any kind of answer or comment, but went his way.

But only to appear again presently at the hall-door as the soldiers passed out to wish them 'Good-bye;' and to give to each man a rather formidable roll of tobacco from a basket on his arm.

When it came to Stephen's turn, he too received the roll of tobacco. But instead of saying,—

'Good-bye, old fellow; I only wish I may come across you again some day, if I should be again as hard put to it, for something to eat and drink and smoke;' as he probably would have done if he could have 'kept it up,' in spite of his recent discovery, and still more recent fear that he himself was known,—he not only forgot the parting words he had shaped out, but not knowing what he was doing, he put out his hand for the tobacco, which he had already received, and dropped into a pocket.

There was the slightest possible pause, then the colonel took what he supposed to be the proffered hand, gave it a hearty squeeze, dropped it, and turned to the next comer, without one word, or any subsequent sign of interest in Stephen's departure.

CHAPTER XXVI.

STEPHEN'S BIRTHPLACE.

STEPHEN'S emotion as he marched with the troops along the road towards Gualtmore, where (as he had learned so strangely) his mother and brother now were, and with them Miss Vandeleur, so affected him, that for the first time in his military career he brought upon himself a sharp reproof from his sergeant for some neglect of duty in guiding the men.

How could he fail to be moved when so suddenly carried back in thought to the home he had so long left; to the whole series of dissatisfactions with himself and all his surroundings he had there experi-

enced; and to the events in which they had at last culminated,—his break with Miss Vandeleur, and his consequently cutting himself adrift from his home, and from all his friends and acquaintances, to enter upon the life of a private soldier?

And now he was advancing to the very place where, if he did not carefully guard himself, all the weary and useless round of suffering and discontent might have to be again gone over, with its life of weak indulgence, vain hopes, cruel and bitter disappointments.

It was a curious fact that, within the last few hours, he had suddenly become conscious for the first time that he was forgetting home, so far as its dangerous influences or temptations were concerned; was becoming reconciled to the life he had chosen, provided he obtained in it the rank he sought, and so on the whole was doing well—the experiment was, so far, successful.

Now everything was changed or changing, through the colonel's news as to the residents of the place the troops were going to protect.

And that place itself was one to deepen the effect of all that might happen therein, so far as he was concerned. It was his birthplace.

As he grew calmer under the self-control evoked by the sergeant's warning, he ironically reminded himself that he was anything but a gentleman visitor on the way to Gualtmore; that there would be no liveried domestics as of old, coming forth to meet and welcome him after any prolonged absence; that in all human probability, whatever he might wish or fear, that he would not be able to catch even a single glimpse of his relatives; that even the attempt secretly might bring down a still more humiliating reminder from his superiors, perhaps even before his relations, and at the very moment of mutual recognition.

But did he want to see them?

His mother? Yes. He felt his conscience was not at rest with regard to her. He knew he had left her, when her weak health might cause his departure to have the most serious effect.

The earl, his brother? No. He should

not much care if he never saw him again. But the harshness of this first impulsive thought died away as he reflected that, after all, it was rather their external relations that made them so hostile, than any deeper influences springing from vital differences in the hearts and minds of the men themselves. Perhaps, had he been the earl and elder brother, he might have been an equally hard judge of the younger one's aberrations. And thus, practically, he came to the conclusion that it would not very much matter whether he did or did not see Lord Harlaxton—whether he was or was not recognised by him—so far as he alone was concerned.

'But Miss Vandeleur? Ah! he began once more to falter in thought, in purpose, in aim, as her image came back to him as last seen, her expressive face full of the most intense emotion that the wounded modesty of woman perhaps had ever shown, but more beautiful in her outward restrained anger towards him—a thousand times more beautiful than he had ever seen her before.

Then, as if a dash of cold water had

been thrown suddenly in his face by her, he shrank back from the glowing picture he was summoning up, as he reminded himself—

'And she is now, perhaps, engaged to the earl! Was he likely to lose the chance my folly and recklessness had given him?'

That sobering thought again sent him back to the possible meeting with his mother.

'Would she not determinedly press him to leave the army, through his discharge, which she could so easily, procure?

'Could he resist her appeals — if made in her own behalf—if she told him her very life was bound up with his return.'

And yet what a laugh for his companions at the clubs in the Row, or on the race-course, if he did yield! How eloquent they would be on the courage and grandeur of his project, till he tried it, and then the poor devil got his mother to clear him, and bring him back 'a sadder but wiser man' to the old haunts, and the old life, and the old apron strings.

He was interrupted in these unpleasant cogitations by the first aspect of Gualtmore across the park, and a strange aspect it was.

Every window frame, every chimney moulding, every bit of tracery on the surface of the wall was brought into strong yet soft relief by the snow, which found in those delicate hollows shelter from the wind, and nestled there.

But it was the fading sunlight that gave such inexpressible charm and colour to these delicate snow lines, suffusing them with an exquisite rose tint; so that for a few moments Stephen could only stand and gaze at the spectacle wrapt in its beauty.

'Shand!' cried the voice of Major Etheredge, summoning him to his side, and speaking to him in low tones, 'there is likely to be work for us here to-night, if all that I have heard from the comte and his wife be true. We shall stay here some hours, get thoroughly fed and rested, then proceed on the march some time before midnight; but only to return in silence and secrecy, to take up

our position, in the mansion, there to wait.

'Meanwhile there is a bit of very important work which I confide to you. There are three points—at some little distance from the mansion and from each other—where sentinels must be posted, so that no one will be likely to see them under the trees, and from whence every possible approach to Gualtmore is commanded.

'On this paper is a rude but capital plan, marked with three red crosses. Those are the spots where I want you to plant three of our best, most intelligent men, reserving yourself for constant communication with them, and to watch for our return in strict silence.

'The order is, that no one be allowed to pass (unless by volunteering the countersign). Should a number of men appear, too many to be stopped, fire on them, and retire through the trees to the mansion, firing continuously as you go for the more effectual warning. I have little doubt the attack, if made, will be late enough for us to be ready to respond. If not, there will

be some strength inside. But we must seem to go, which involves actual absence, or they will be too much wary to move at all. Beware of their scouts. We can trust no one that we do not ourselves know. Remember the scouts of to-day!'

Stephen's animated face showed how he felt the importance of the work given to him—and how he was affected by the confidential manner in which the whole position was shown. So that his few earnest words of assurance, that he would do his duty, were not needed to tell Major Etheredge he could have chosen no better man.

And it must be said that all the major's previous inclinings towards Stephen, as a good and extremely promising young soldier, had been intensified a hundred-fold by the belief he owed to him his own life.

As Stephen left the major, he too could not but think of all this, adding to the remembrance of the major's curiosity in the camp about himself and family, the thought,—

'What would he say, could he now know the truth, who I am, and what the people are to me whom I am to aid him to protect?'

END OF VOL. II.

COLSTON AND SON, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.